Pacquiao: I had a talk with God

By Edwin Fernandez
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—THIS IS something that the Mexicans Juan Manuel Marquez and Mauro Antonio Barrera, the American Oscar De La Hoya, the British Ricky Hatton and the Puerto Rican Miguel Cotto—proud warriors who have fallen before Manny Pacquiao's fists—would not have prepared or trained for.

PACQUIAO A4

ACROSS / A11

Acting governor of Maguindanao backs early ARMM polls

WORLD / A18

World leaders hammered over Copenhagen Accord

BUSINESS / B1

11-month budget gap swells to P272.5B

SPORTS / A12

Crack lineup of sparmates for Pacquiao

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Tuesday, December 22, 2009 ** 6 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 14 P18

Give GMA a break this Christmas, foes told

By Christian V. Esguerra

MAYBE ALL SHE WANTS is some silent nights.

Malacañang yesterday called on critics of President Macapagal-Arroyo to observe a verbal truce during the holidays, just

GIVE GMA A4

Pulse Asia (Dec. 8-10 survey): Voters' Choice for President

AQUINO: 45 percent

VILLAR: 23 percent

ESTRADA: 19 percent

TEODORO: 5 percent

GORDON: 1 percent

VILLANUEVA: 1 percent

Noynoy solidifies lead

Mayon hit by 2,000 tremors

By Roy M. Maud
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—BOOMING AND RUMBLING since Sunday night, Mayon volcano shook glass windows of houses and stunted a popular television drama, keeping people in Albay anxiously guessing when it would finally unleash its fury.

"I think Mayon is really going to explode," said Noel Sucillada, a farmer living in Barangay Sua in Camalig town.

After a week of puffing out ash and sending buses of lava trickling down its steep slopes, the 2,460-meter volcano overlooking the Gulf of Albay and this provincial capital switched into high gear on Monday with nearly 2,000 volcanic earthquakes and tremors since Sunday state volcanologists said.

The emission of sulfur dioxide—an indication of magma rising inside the

MAYON A6

HANGING IN THE BALANCE A baby of an evacuee is weighed during a medical checkup at a shelter for residents who fled the slopes of Mayon volcano on Monday.

But Mar, Loren in close race for vice president

By Cyril L. Bonabono, Inquirer Research
Cathy Yamsuan and Christine O. Avendaño

SEN. BENIGNO "NOYNOY" AQUINO III CONSOLIDATED his "sizeable" lead in the presidential race, but Senators Loren Legarda and Manuel "Mar" Roxas II were locked in a close fight for the vice presidency, according to the latest Pulse Asia survey.

Forty-five percent of 1,080 adults interviewed nationwide from Dec. 8 to 10 said they would vote for Aquino if elections were held at the time.

Nearly 50 million Filipinos will select a president, a vice president, nearly 300 lawmakers for the two houses of Congress and more than 17,500 local positions in the May general elections.

Considering the survey's margin of error of plus-or-minus 2 percentage points, Aquino's rating was virtually the same as the 44 percent he got in a similar survey in October.

"The support for Senator Aquino remains virtually unchanged," Ana Maria Tabunda, chief research fellow of Pulse Asia Inc., said in a statement, comparing the latest results with the previous survey.

NOYNOY A5

Way behind Aquino were Sen. Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. (25 percent, up 4 points) and deposed President Joseph Estrada (19 percent, up 6 points).

Perlas appeals poll ruling: Give new politics a chance

DISQUALIFIED PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANT Nicanor Perlas has formally appealed the decision of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to exclude him from the list of presidential candidates in the May 10 elections.

Bringing with him about 100 supporters in a show of force, Perlas filed his motion of opposition to the Comelec's decision to disqualify him as an official presidential candidate.

"Do not be a 'nuisance.' Do not prevent a faithful determination of the true will of the electorate and their longing for new politics, thereby making a mockery of the electoral process," Perlas told the Comelec.

Last week, the Comelec approved the certificates of candidacy of eight presidential aspirants—Sen. Benigno Aquino III, JC de los Reyes, former President Joseph Estrada, Sen. Richard Gordon, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, former Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Bro. Eddie Villanueva and Sen. Manuel Villar.

The Comelec disqualified Perlas as a

PERLAS A7

Doctors say Andal Sr. fit to be jailed

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—DOCTORS HAVE DECLARED Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr., head of a powerful clan blamed for the massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao, physically fit to be jailed, but military officials said he was safer in the military hospital here.

Ampatuan, 70, a key ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, was arrested on rebellion charges on Dec. 5, a day after martial law, which lasted eight days, was proclaimed in the province.

He was first detained at a private hospital, from where he was whisked away a week later to the Camp Panacan Station Hospital.

The governor is also under investigation for multiple murder in connection with the Nov. 23 massacre of supporters of his political rival, Ismael Mangudadatu, and 30 journalists who were to cover the filing of his gubernatorial candidacy in the May elections.

DOCTORS A7

Military role in polls called 'dangerous'

By Christine O. Avendaño, Leila B. Salaverria and Jocelyn R. Uy

WILL THERE BE A REPEAT OF "HELLO Garci" in the May elections?

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon yesterday said the proposal of acting Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales to deploy the military to perform election duties next year was "dangerous."

"This is creating conditions that would expose the soldiers to partisan politics," said Biazon, a former chief of

MILITARY A6

Homeless kids tell Jesus' story in song

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—CHRISTMAS IS THE time to love.

This was the message of 300 children singing their hearts out at Calvary Chapel in Barangay Handumanan, Bacolod City, on Sunday morning.

The children are among the 165 residents of the Calvary Chapel Home for orphaned, abused and disabled children. The home is run by American Pastor Joe Romanus and his wife Billie.

With smiles on their faces, they sang, danced and played musical instruments as they told the story of

HOMELESS A6

ONCE UPON A TIME IN BETHLEHEM With smiles on their faces, children of Calvary Chapel Home in Handumanan portray the Christmas story in Bacolod City on Sunday.

HELPING HAND Pastor Joe Romanus and his wife Billie holding one of their words appeal for help to keep afloat a shelter for homeless and abused children.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

PCSO

17	28	29	7	6	11	
SUPER LOTTO 6/49						
3	2	8	0	5	9	
2D LOTTO						
1	0	7	6	7	1	5
MEGA LOTTO 6/45						
6	16	35	30	40	45	

P9,217,931.40

NPA raids police station, take guns

By Jocelor R. Uy in Manila
and Dello T. Maller Jr. in Southern Luzon

COMMUNIST REBELS DISGUISED AS JOURnalists gained entry into a police station in Quezon province and carted away 14 firearms on Sunday, the police said.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Jesus Versosa yesterday placed all police units across Luzon on heightened alert as pursuit operations were launched.

He said the heightened alert was also in anticipation of how the actions the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), might stage in mark its founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

Versosa also placed the entire police force in Tabaquero (Calamba, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) on full alert to mobilize all personnel and resources for the manhunt.

About 70 NPA rebels armed with high-powered firearms raided a police station in San Narciso town, Quezon, on Sunday afternoon, taking away five M-16 rifles, four shotguns, four 9-mm pistols and a .38-cal. revolver, a handsfree and ammunition, the PNP said in a statement.

Convincing disguise

On the ground, however, Senior Supt. Elmo Francis Sarona, Quezon police chief, said 25 rebels—some wearing Army camouflage uniforms, carrying high-powered weapons and accompanied by five MS "sympathizers" (female members) who posed as news reporters—entered the police station in the town proper at about 4 p.m. and subdued the eight officers on duty.

Their disguise was convincing. That was why they easily penetrated the station," Sarona told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

The raiders also seized a laptop computer, three cell phones and cash amounting to P30,000 before fleeing in nearby Sampaguita Boundaries, Sarona said.

Versosa said the police recovered the group's getaway vehicle, a Mitsubishi van in Buenavista.

Citing records, Versosa said the CPP/NPA has been known to stage hostile acts when its founding anniversary is approaching.

"Those offensive activities include 'abuse of force' and other high-profile actions to gain propaganda mileage," he said.

Citing reports, Sarona said the supposed journalists were talking with the police desk officer when the rest of the rebel intruders rushed in and disarmed the officers on duty. They were herded into a room and tied up.

The rebels reminded the security They escaped in two vans, heading toward Buenavista. It happened in 10 minutes.

"The NPA were looking for the chief of police but he was not around. He was with a team of policemen on patrol," Sarona said.

Citing reports, Sarona said the rebels were estimated to number around 40 and were fully armed.

"Some of the rebels were spotted conducting checkpoints, ready to stage an ambush against any encounters," Sarona said.

Chief Supt. Heriberto Palad, Calabarzon regional police director, said all San Narciso policemen led by Insp. Marcelino Uy would be relieved of their duties.

They would be investigated and could be administratively charged for possible lapses in police operation procedures, Palad said in a radio interview.

Ironically, San Narciso was recently declared as "Mich-free" area by the military.

The attack by the communist rebels occurred as the Armed Forces of the Philippines declared that it was inclined to declare a ceasefire with the insurgent during the holiday season.

The AFP traditionally declares a seven-day holiday ceasefire on Dec. 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1.

With a report from AFP

Local cops ordered back to mother units

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POlice has ordered the shuttling of all police detachments to town and city halls throughout the country in a bid to insulate PNP personnel from partisan politics during the election season.

In a command conference in Subic, Zambales, on Friday, PNP Director General Jesus Versosa gave regional police directors until the first week of January to comply with his abolition order and direct all police personnel detailed with local government units to return to their mother units.

"The PNP is taking this measure to insulate our personnel from partisan political activities and ensure that a neutral and apolitical police force is in place in the run-up to the national elections next year," said Versosa in a statement on Sunday.

City and town mayors who have supervisory powers over the police forces in their locality have been allowed by law to form special units they could detail as police detachments to their offices or other requirements and less enforcement effort.

But the system has led to police becoming embroiled in partisan politics, undermining their credibility as "neutral and fair" disposers of the law, Versosa noted.

"The same ultimately results in the breakdown of respect for the chain of command and loyalty to the organization as police officers are increasingly caught up in the game of political patronage," he said. Jocelyn R. Uy

Oil firms cut prices by 50¢-75¢ per liter

By Amy R. Remo

LOCAL OIL COMPANIES have slashed the prices of their diesel by 75 centavos a liter and of their gasoline and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter beginning yesterday.

Small oil player Eastern Petroleum Corp. was first to implement the rollback yesterday, followed by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Phoenix Petroleum Philippines, PTT Philippines, Chevron Philippines and Total Philippines which all implemented their price cuts effective 12:01 a.m. today.

The latest roll-back reflected a decline in petroleum product prices in the world market, the oil companies said.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that the price of the regional benchmark Dubai crude dropped to an average $76 a barrel in the first 18 days of December, from the previous month's average of $78 a barrel.

The price of gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products fell to an average $81 a barrel as of Dec. 16, from the November average of $82 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel similarly dropped to an $82 a barrel average in the Dec. 1-16 period from the $85 a barrel average the previous month.

Makati businessmen pick Aquino-Roxas tandem

By Abigail L. Ho

SENATORIAL PREFERENCE

Preference	Voting Rank
[illegible]	1-2
REVILLA, Ramon	23.7	1-4
[illegible]	1-3
[illegible]	46.6	2-4
[illegible]	32.1	3-5
[illegible]	43.1	3-8
[illegible]	41.7	3-8
[illegible]	46.7	5-8
[illegible]	31.0	7-11
[illegible]	31.0	10-11
[illegible]	28.6	10-11
[illegible]	8.5	10-13
[illegible]	14.3	12-14
[illegible]	9.1	13-15
[illegible]	13.2	14-15
[illegible]	9.1	15-15
[illegible]	9.2	15-15
[illegible]	8.5	15-15
[illegible]	8.5	15-15
[illegible]	8.5	15-15
[illegible]	8.7	15-15
[illegible]	8.5	15-15
[illegible]	3.5	15-15
[illegible]	3.3	15-15
[illegible]	3.3	15-15
[illegible]	3.3

Comelec denies bias against Gov. Panlilio

THE COMMISSION ON ELECtion (Comelec) Second Division has denied a motion filed by Dagupan Gov. Ed Panlilio seeking to consolidate jurisdiction over the election protest case filed against the governor and Jeffrey Fleschman to the one of his lawyers in contempt for acting with "disrespect" toward division members.

In an order dated Dec. 17, the three members of the Second Division said there was no reason they acted with bias against Panlilio in the election case filed by losing gubernatorial candidate Lilia Pineda. The case is set to be presided over by a

The Second Division instead ordered Panlilio's lawyer, Ernesto Francisco Jr., to explain why he should not be cited for contempt.

Second Division member Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer, chair, and Commissioners Lucenito Tagle and Elias Yusoph said Francisco had been debating personal ego and subjecting them to trial by publicity through the media.

Francisco said the order to cite him in contempt had no basis.

"If I am cited for contempt, I will go up to the Supreme Court. Commissioner Ferrer is just attacking and is trying to get back at me for [illegible] and used to being questioned," said Francisco in a text message.

He also gave Panlilio's reaction to the contempt threat, that it was "disturbing and ancient."

"I believe there is nothing embarrassing in the actions and dealings of Attorney Francisco with the Comelec's Second Division. All the motions he filed, particularly the one asking for the inhibition of the members of the Second Division, were done upon my instruction. I hereby register my strongest objection and condemnation of this act which shows the latest lack of Commissioner Ferrer and company with respect to the rules," he quoted Panlilio as saying.

Panlilio said he, 4 filed a motion to have Ferrer, Tagle and Yusoph inhibit themselves from the recount case for supposed bias and undue haste in handling the case.

But what favored Panlilio could it did not sit well with the lawyer with "unreasonable demands."

"We have always exercised great magnanimity in resolving all pending incidents before us, to the extent that [Panlilio] has always enjoyed some kind of leeway," the members of the division said. *Jhessa L. Paz-Dagoon*

7 Pinoy crew still missing

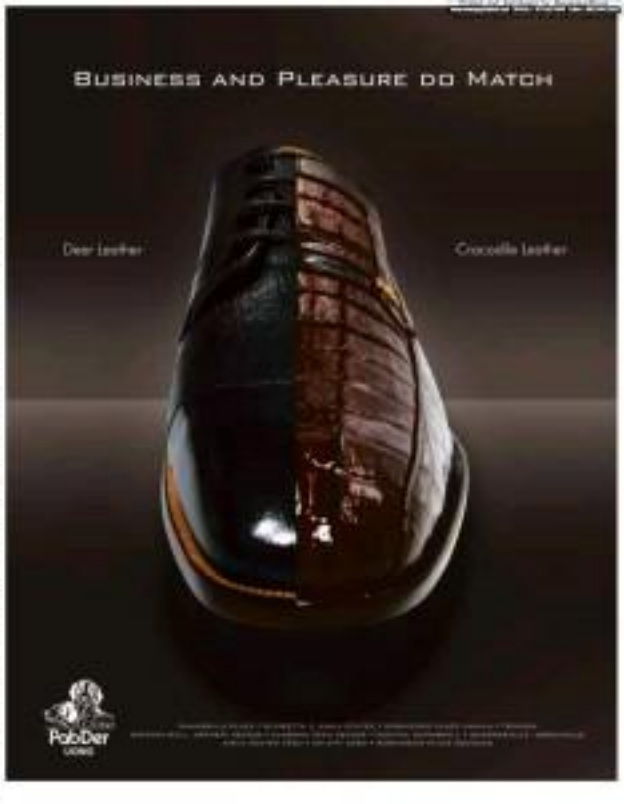
SEVEN FILIPINO CREW MEMbers of the MV Jean F II remain missing after the Panamanian cargo ship sank off Tripoli, Lebanon, last week, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said Monday.

The three crewmen have been accounted, the DFA added.

Citing a report from the Philippine Embassy in Beirut, the DFA identified those considered as Danilo Peñaranda, Wilson Sicoson, Lutgar Gopalgaral, Mishel Dilola, Edgardo Pesnes, Jeyjeffrey Bada, Rafael Tuanda, Ronnie Cabanas, Jovelen Bulawa, Regelio Dequina, Jenfrel Ramamoan, Jessey Quintes and Jason Magsino.

There was a lone Filipino survivor, which brought the number of Filipino crew of the Jean F II to 21, but the DFA said it was not releasing his name or those of the missing until their next of kin had been notified.

The Lebanese Red Cross reported that the survivors in helicopter, mostly Filipinos, were mainly suffering from "exhaustion, broken bones and contusions." *Cynthia D. Balana*



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Mayon shaken by 2,000 tremors

From page A1

volcano—jumped to 6,000 tons per day from the normal 800, said the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

It also reported "audible hissing and rumbling sounds" in the eastern flank of the volcano, accompanied by incandescent lava flows at night.

Lava fountains bursting from the cone-shaped volcano overnight rose 200 meters in the air, Phivolcs said.

Red hot lava continuously flowed down along the gullies of Bonga Bonot, facing Legazpi City, Guinobatan, Camalig, Daraga and Libog in Sto. Domingo town.

Scientists raised the alert level of 3 (unrest) to 4 (one step below a hazardous eruption), saying one was possible within days. The 5th, highest level is when a major eruption is already in progress.

Hearing distance

While more than 100 residents were treated for the Lidgen (8:30 Observatory) Center, around 11.2 kilometers away from the crater, "how much more at the nearer distance?" asked resident volcanologist Ed Laguerta.

Residents of Barangays Maslog, Manuluan and Mapipo in Guinobatan, Santa Rhosa-cordia in Santo Domingo, and Bun., Tumpa, Cabitagan and the other areas of Camalig heard the loud rumbling from Mayon continuously on Sunday night.

At first, Edwin Iglesia, a machine shop welder, thought it was a thunderstorm he and his friend heard from his house in Barangay Tupaslan in Camalig at about 8 p.m. on Sunday. But then, they saw no lightning, he said.

The hissing, Iglesia said, were repeated successively at ten to 30 short 30 minutes, alternating followed by rumbling sounds that made glass windows vibrate and showed the dramatic dialogue in a television.

Laguerta warned defiant residents at the no-go zone to down the home. A massive eruption could trigger pyroclastic flows...superheated gas and volcanic debris that race down the slopes of Mayon at very high speeds, vaporizing everything in their path.

Dollar: villagers

More extensive explosions of ash could drift toward nearby towns and cities.

Gov. Joey Salceda, who chairs the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC), said Mayon's eruption was the most dangerous type of volcano in the world, and the province had experienced difficulty moving only the remaining 6,000 residents who had refused to leave or had kept coming back to the danger zones.

"There are people who have been evacuated three times and are right. "We've been putting out and moms with them."

However, due to the declaration of the alert level 4 and the very obvious rumbling sounds accompanied by continuous ashfall, Salceda ordered that they were accounted for at the 40 forced evacuation sites pumped from more 76 persons to 82 percent in the night of Sunday, barely hours after the Phivolcs chief advised the alert level," the governor said.

Task Force Bicol, which is composed of members of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police, discovered that some residents who failed to proceed to the evacuation sites were sick or disabled.

"This is why we conducted special care and assistance in moving these people who are also elderly so that they could be provided special care at their designated evacuation camps," said Capt. Ranulfo Banawan, the group's spokesperson.

The PDCC experts to move out 47,281 more people and possibly 10,000 others if a hazardous eruption progresses, Banawan added.

Evacuees

So far, the council, with the help of the task force, has already accounted for 44,394 people or 9,217 families from 30 villages or 21 different evacuation centers across the province.

The Army and the Albay Health and Emergency Management Response Team (Chemt) evacuated all the sick and disabled persons from the 6-8 km danger zones.

The evacuees may be out of homes now, but living in the temporary shelters has exposed them to diseases.

Hushing a crying baby in her arms, Analiza Rosario, 29, said diseases could spread fast in the cramped rooms, mostly affecting children and infants.

"The children are getting sick ... We are not also able to sleep and eat well anymore," Rosario said. With reports from EJMAYON Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon; AP

Pacman defends move to join NP

By Cathy Yamsuan

BEIJING HONG MANNY PACquiao last night defended his decision to join the Nacionalista Party, saying President Macapagal-Arroyo's term was ending and he had to look for another candidate to be president to support in the May elections.

Pacquiao, running for his congressional seat in Sarangani province, spoke to the business set up NP meeting in Mandaluyong City where he said party members' decision that Manny Villar signed as his opponent in a top-ticket party's candidacies.

"I did not hate my back on Mayor [Mel Antonio] but for unity is ending ... I have to support another president," Duquiao said in Pilipino.

Asked if the Villar camp reacted in his decision, he said: "Nothing. We all have to make decisions of our own."

Pacquiao was a former member of the Lakas-Kampi-Kadagi party.

Pacquiao earned rave reviews for the NP meeting, accompanied by his wife Jinkee, who wore a body-hugging red blouse and denim pants.

Before the affair began, whispers of delight were heard from the crowd as Bilibid's flagship Lipanon sensational candidate Rep. Ferdinand "Bong-bong" Marcos Jr. approached party-list Representative Imee Gonzalez and Liza Maza.

The Ilocos new NP guest candidate for senator.

Marcos shook hands with the two lawmakers, who had objected to his inclusion in the NP slate.

Maza said Marcos merely said "hello" but the encounter left her "surprised and uncomfortable."

Talking earlier with reporters, Pacquiao said he had "no choice" but to team up with the NP because Lakas already had a candidate for the Sarangani seat.

He blamed Malacañang for the legal tangle that prevented Lakas-Kampi-Kadagi from fielding a full slate. "Nothing is impossible. Pacquiao is legal to succeed Mercedes Gatbi said Lakas lacks a last-ditch attempt to get the champion's support but it had some success and Pacquiao did not accept the nomination.

Asked why Gatbi said: "The Palace has been actively going on in this country and the party-switching is allowed by the present law," Within a report from Agnes Z. Zamo, Inquirer Mindanao

Homeless kids tell Jesus' story in song

From page A1

Christ's birth in Bethlehem before the residents of Barangays Sili, Felisa and Handumanan, as well as friends of the home.

In the afternoon, they also shared their message of love at the barangay hall before other residents.

While the children will surely get gifts under the tree on Christmas Day, "we don't want them to forget that Christmas is about Jesus and His love," the pastor's wife said.

She recalled how, as a child, her father would tell her that when he counted his blessings, he wasn't counting how many houses or cars he owned. He was grateful for having been gifted by God with a child.

"We want our children at the home to know that they are the most important people to us and they are very much loved," she said.

Through the years, the Glory Chapel Home has cared for some 400 children, some of whom have grown up to become successful teachers and medical workers working in the Philippines and abroad.

"While the home is doing so many wonderful miracles for these children, we cannot close our eyes to the reality of its day-to-day needs," said Reliquy Nergosa Pamintuan-Lumbres, president of the home.

The foundation is helping raise funds to keep the Calvary Chapel Home going.

With so many children in need and care for, there are times when the Rustanciscos don't have enough funds to make it until the end of the month, Sabellla said.

"If only we would get more people to commit to giving even a small amount every month for the home—it would make a big difference for so many children. We pray, this Christmas, is that more people will help the home, not just this one time, but in a more permanent way," she said.

Those interested in helping may e-mail hallyjaneg@rustanciscos@yahoo.com.

Pacquiao: I had a talk with God

From page A1

PACQUIAO

for the first time, the Philippines' most famous athlete and the world's ponnd for pound best-ranking boxer revealed the secret of his success: He had a conversation with God who promised him "strength and power."

"In my 32 years here on earth, God appeared to me once and told me to have unconditional faith in Him," the seven-time ring champion said in the vernacular before 1,500 guests during his birthday bash on Thursday night at the KCC Convention Center here.

"That is true," the senator-turned "Boxer of the Decade" by Boxrec news agency yesterday—quickly added after the audience burst with applause.

"I was not yet very popular and world champion when our God appeared to me and assured me of strength and power," he said.

Pacquiao gave no hint about where or when the apparition occurred.

Like a politician

As Pacquiao spoke, the audience sat quietly. Their excitement picked up when he told them of the secret behind his deep emotion.

He said: "This is the first time I revealed that ... although I was asked many times what are the secrets that made me very popular and world champion."

Sounding more like a politician than a prized fighter who lets his fists do the talking for him, Pacquiao also said: "Would you like to know where I get my strength and power?"

The crowd yelled, "Yes," then fell silent as each every word he was saying.

He said God told him: "For what am I will not leave you, I will not abandon you."

Win or lose

Every time Pacquiao said that he drew his strength from God, the audience responded by saying, "Amen."

He said this was why in every fight he fought, he would kneel and pray in his corner—to seek Divine Guidance.

"Win or lose, I will pray or the corner to thank God for all the blessings" he said.

"What about you, did you count your blessings?" he asked the crowd. "Remember to thank God for all that He has done. He will give you your needs."

With the help of his cunning posture, Pacquiao had some 2,000 senior citizens while toiling economy at the mall. He performed with singer-composer Lito Camo, entertaining his loud and playful audience.

In an expression of gratitude, he also held raffle draws, the smallest prize being grocery items and the grand prize a car.

Dionisia, Pacquiao's mother, said she was very proud of her son, noting that, despite his worldwide fame and the fortune he had earned at boxing, he "still remembers God as his creator, protector and inspiration."

Dionisia does her number

"My son is very humble, he was like that while he was young. I am very proud of you, Manny," Dionisia told her son.

"Thank you, ma," he responded.

Dionisia performed a dance number despite what she said were her aching feet as a result of wearing high heeled shoes.

Pacquiao also had other secrets that helped bring him to where he was and that would be read in a book he was writing, which would be released sometime soon.

Another accolade

As if the honors he has heaped were not enough, Pacquiao yesterday was another title: Boxrec named him Boxer of the Decade.

Another accolade might have had Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s name written all over it after he stopped set of the Sing at the end of 2007 with a 40-0 record and five wins in five different weight classes.

Instead, it went to the Filipino southpaw as popular that he is now running for the congressional seat of Sarangani province in Mindanao in the May elections—under the banner of the Nacionalista Party.

Two Mannys

Sen. Manuel Villar, NP standard bearer, yesterday said the entry of Pacquiao into the party emphasized its campaign slant that focuses on success through unity.

"We have very similar backgrounds," Villar said.

"We both struggled and succeeded... This is the start of a long partnership," Villar said in a party meeting held in Mandaluyong City. MAR reports from Darlie Rousseau and Reuters

Military role in polls called 'dangerous'

From page A1

staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"The proposal is dangerous in light of the 'Hello Garci' scandal," he said in a phone interview.

Bianne was referring to alleged conversations purportedly between President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and then Commission on Elections (Comelec) chairman Virgilio Garcillano and President Macapagal-Arroyo that she wrote the 2004 presidential election. He denied the allegations.

Bianne said he had always opposed any deployment of troops for election duties, except for security and defense.

Gonzalez' proposal "can be the beginning of partisan politics" following the military, particularly troops carrying candidates, Bianne said.

"They are not trained, they are not equipped and not organized to perform bodyguard duties," he said.

"If they would be deployed that way that could create tension in certain areas," Bianne said. "Tensions, rebels, and private armies would be having a heyday if a tension will be the resultant effect of such deployment."

He also expressed concern that Gonzalez had been advocating a shift from a liberal to a more democratic will solidiers taking the lead in the troubleshoots.

He said he planned to file a resolution in the Senate opposing Gonzalez' proposal.

No officer punished so far

Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, the Army chief ordered on Sunday said he was working to redefine the military's role in the May balloting and place troops at the disposal of the Commission on Elections in order to prevent another massacre similar to the Nov. 23 slaughter of 57 people in Maguindanao.

"The involvement of the AFP top officers in electoral fraud in 2004 advises against giving the AFP an expanded role in the conduct of the next elections," said Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo.

"The question is, why haven't the AFP and the PNP (Philippine National Police) disarmed and dismantled these illegal armed groups that they claim to know?" Ocampo said.

Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III pointed out that there had been no clearance in the military's alleged involvement in vote rigging in 2004.

"Were there officers punished? Here did the AFP reprimand Brig. Gen. (Francisco) Gudani's involvement?" he said. Gudani has disclosed that the President's husband had been involved in the cheating in the 2004 elections to deliver boxes containing about P100 million.

Army chief opposes move

Mismedanao Rep. Simeon Rufino Sinsuat watched the Gonzalez proposal would "lead to the military being used for political interests."

Sinsuat, vice chair of the House committee on national defense, reiterated his proposal to extend the term of Gen. Victor Ibrado as AFP chief of staff up to the end of the 4th Arroyo's term on June 30 to ensure stability in the military. Ibrado is to retire in March at age 56.

Speculations is rife that the next chief of staff will be Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, the Army chief reported to be close to Mrs Arroyo.

Bangit yesterday said the military should focus on warning other armed groups than acting as both guards of politicians.

"The best assistance he can render is to see that duty is immediately address all armed groups," he told reporters yesterday during the Philippine Army's advanced celebration of the AFP's 74th founding anniversary.

Bangit said he would resolve record to higher military officials in a conference today that something duress during the election be delegated to the police and other private security agencies.

Give GMA a break this Christmas, foes told

From page A1

of which she plans to spend with her constituents in Pampanga.

Eddy Olivar, deputy presidential spokesperson, admitted that Ms Arroyo would take the opportunity of her visit to Pampanga to observe the places to run for a seat in Congress in the May elections—to reach out to voters.

"I hope the critics of the President will give her a break," Olivar said. "This is just the President having a breather. Christmas of all times of the year, is the best time to be neighborly."

Undue advantage

Mr. Arroyo has come under attack for her decision to run for a lower elective post after serving nine years as president. The longest term of any Philippine leader after the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Some critics say her being the incumbent President gives her an overwhelming advantage over her opponents in Pampanga. Others view her move as part of her plan to remain to power. Even as Speaker and later as prime minister, if the Philippines should shift to a parliamentary system.

Her bid to slide down and run for a seat in Congress is unprecedented for a Philippine leader.

Hong Kong trip

Mr Arroyo is set to return to Manila tomorrow from a three-day Hong Kong getaway in the company of her four grandchildren.

She is scheduled to spend Christmas Eve with her province mates in Pampanga, where she will also deliver her annual Christmas message.

"I would imagine that while she's there, she would take the opportunity to visit her neighbors, her constituents, obviously, her sisters that she needs to be reminded about in next year's elections," her spokesperson said.

"I wouldn't be surprised if she takes advantage of her vacation there to call on people," Olivar said.

Ms Arroyo's return as commissioner of her candidacy ended speculation about the moves behind her frequent visits to her home province, particularly in its second congressional district. She has positioned to do minimal campaigning and instead focus on her job as president.

'Undue advantage'

Citing security concerns, Olivar declined to give details of Ms Arroyo's schedule during the Christmas break.

He didn't say if the First Family would even spend a vacation in Baguio, where they traditionally spend the holidays at The Mansion.

What seems clear is that the Palace wants a relatively quiet Christmas season for Ms Arroyo.

Olivar sought to dismiss speculation that Ms Arroyo would eventually lose herself up for the post of prime minister.

"I have no idea where that report came from. That seems to be an only-somebody-manufactured-for-purposes-that's not true," he said.

"Congress is Congress, yes," Olivar said.

Perlas appeals poll ruling

From page A1

presidential candidate because it declared that he could wage a nationwide campaign.

Perlas, however, claimed that more important than money and political party was exposure in the national media and on the Internet.

Money and political parties do not necessarily translate into votes, he said.

"Votes come mga kasi than money and political party is presence and exposure in the national media which reach millions of voters," he told the Comelec.

Perlas said a candidate could wage a credible national campaign only if he or she could ignite the imagination of the electorate about real possibilities of change in the political landscape and future of the country.

"The candidate can achieve this not only through a political party and lots of money, but through the national media and Internet as well," he added.

Perlas also told the Comelec that he and his de facto party, the Partido ng Bayanihan sa Kambayanan (Pangmasa), had almost 700 coordinators around the country and many volunteers.

"If the Comelec permits us to operate, [it] will become an instrument of injustice to the electorate, a suppressor of new politics, a prime promoter of traditional politics and an obvious worshipper of rich politicians over more qualified middle-class leaders who bring vision, integrity and competence in the political life of the nation," he said. Ivan Z. Hernandez

PERLAS appeals to Comelec: Don't be an instrument of injustice.

Doctors say Andal Sr. fit to be jailed

From page A1

ARMSTRONG SR.

"He is suffering from diseases that can't be managed even if he is not imprisoned," said Dr. Rhoda Feniery, detainee's attending physician.

What is being maintained now, she said, is Ampatuan's diabetes and blood pressure that still is within the normal range. His other vital signs, she said, are also within normal limits. "The patient is stable.

"He is OK," Feniery said.

Jail awaits governor

Col. Julieto Solis, spokesperson of the Eastern Military Command, said that Ampatuan would be safer at the camp hospital.

Military officials, fearing other supporters or supporters attempting to spring Ampatuan from jail, last week pleaded with a brace-over—and got approval—to forego his appearance on a petition for the writ of habeas corpus.

"After the inquest, the ideal thing is for him to be committed to a civilian detention facility," said Carlos Zarate, secretary general of the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao.

"But there are, of course, many considerations for that: ... It appears that his continued detention in Camp Panacan is for his protection," he said.

"But sooner than later, we will see him being brought to a civilian detention facility. The regular process is being followed."

Ampatuan and four of his sons, including Zaldy, the governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, are among at least 34 people named in the rebellion charge sheet for allegedly resisting government efforts to arrest suspects in the massacre.

Three of the sons are detained by police at General Santos City and the other, Andal Jr., is confined at the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila.

Hearing reset

Ampatuan Jr., mayor of Datu Unsay town, has been charged with 57 counts of murder and is the only suspect detained in connection with the massacre.

Judge Jocelyn Bahs Reyes of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 220 was scheduled to hear the charges against Ampatuan Jr. today in proceedings to be held at Camp Crame.

But Midas Marquez, spokesperson of the high tribunal, said yesterday the hearing had been reset after the holdups because Camp Crame was still preparing its facilities.

"We are still going to coordinate with Camp Crame officials," Marquez said.

Saturday, Sigfrid Fortun, Ampatuan Jr.'s lawyer, asked lawyers to direct officials of the Department of Justice to explain why they should not be cited in contempt for bringing the massacre suspect to a DOJ preliminary investigation Friday.

Circus spectacle

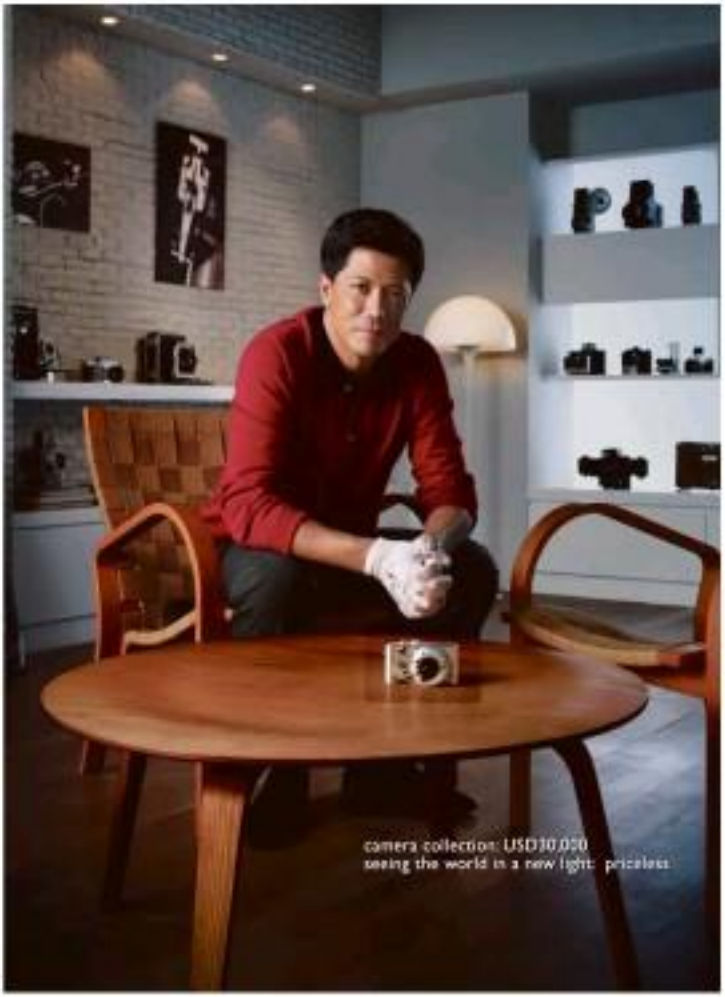
Fortun said in a four-page motion that there was no practical purpose for the preliminary other than "what the media and the public's appetite for a circus spectacle."

Angry journalists attacked Ampatuan Jr. as he was being led out of the department, injuring him.

The daughter of the 30 journalists was the newest in one incident somewhere in the world, making the Philippines the most dangerous place for reporters on earth after Iraq and Afghanistan.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Gary Olivar yesterday said the journalists' anger was "understandable." But, he added, "nothing justifies taking the law into your own hands."

Leila de Lima, chair of the Commission on Human Rights, said at the weekend that even accused mass murderers like the Ampatuans had the right to be presented immediately to a prosecutor. With reports from Norman Bordadora, Julie M. Aurelio and Christine F. Figueroa



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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Complete justice

EDITORIALS

IT HAS BEEN ONE MONTH SINCE THE MASSACRE of 57 people, including 30 media men, was executed in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, and it appears that the victims and their relatives will obtain justice.

There is a fair probability that they will get justice in the courts, but that is not enough to give complete justice to them. For complete justice to be rendered to the victims and their families, the government has to go beyond holding smart trials. It has to strike at the very roots of the massacre, the political phenomenon that made possible the commission of the unspeakable crime.

The government has to go after political warlords who make it possible to subvert the will of the people at the polls, and it has to neutralize them now, before the elections in May 2010. If they are out per not of commission now, they will still exert power and influence before and during the elections and may yet determine the results in the national and local polls.

The government has to stare the process of breaking up political dynasties. This, of course, will be a long, complex process because it entails the passage of legislation—this would implement the constitutional provision that says that it is the state policy to prohibit political dynasties as may be provided by law. The process will also have to enlist the help of the people themselves who will have to be convinced that the cultivation and instilling of political dynasties are anti-democratic and not good for them.

The government has to dismantle private armies and stop the practice of supplying them with firearms and ammunition through legal and illegal means. Some of these private armies are ostensibly being used to help the army and the police in fighting rebels and criminal groups. But experience has shown that very often, these private armies go out of control and commit atrocities against the people. The Maguindanao massacre is a horrific example of that.

The people have to exert continuing pressure on the government to put an end to the culture of impunity. It is this culture that has made possible the killing of unarmed, noncombatant activists and militants in the past eight and half years of the Arroyo administration. It is this culture that also made possible the slaying of 99 journalists, including the 30 massacred in Maguindanao, during the same period. We cannot hope to see the end of the culture of impunity under the Arroyo administration, which has given encouragement to and even publicly praised those who ordered the killing of activists. We will have to demand from the next president, whoever he may be, that he put an end to the culture of impunity.

The Maguindanao massacre is a crime so heinous, so barbaric, so monstrous that its victims and their relatives cry out to high heavens for justice to be done to them. Justice in this case cannot be complete and final unless the root causes that made possible the commission of this atrocity are addressed and permanent solutions adopted.

Another chance

MANY PEOPLE LAMENT THAT POLITICS IN THE country seems to be hopeless, that they cannot hope to see change under the present system, that many of these people are those who do not actively participate in political activities, such as voting in elections. Some of them do not even bother to register as voters.

An estimated one million voters failed to register during the registration period that ended on Dec. 31. Now, the Commission on Elections is giving these slackers another chance to register. They will have no more excuse to complain. But they have to go to the registration center and register so that they can vote in the election in May 2010.

The 2010 elections are crucial; they will determine the political direction of the nation in the next six years after a dark period of political and social deviation during the Arroyo administration. The people have the power to bring about change. But first they have to register, and later, go out and vote, and vote intelligently.

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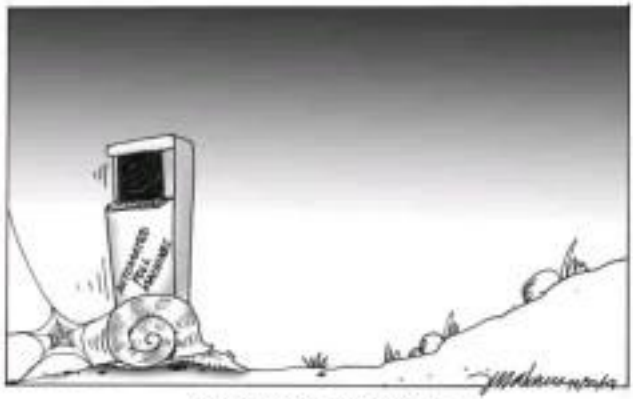

Motorcycle backslide

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

ONE THING LET OUT AN EXPLETIVE AS HE slammed the brakes. On our right, a motorcycle coasted past and then cut between lanes. Another two raced after him. "Hey they must!" he hissed.

"Relax," we murmured. "That's only Vinda setting an land transport in reverse overdrive."

Puzzled, he asked, "Vinda who?"

Lt. Ronaldo Vinda heads the bloated Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. That agency crunch at our numbers. With endless analysis various subjects ranging from number of barangays to death rates and the span of national roads, it land transport here "retrogressing towards the motorcycle?" Vinda asks.

Other cities, like Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur, have long climbed to land-rail systems. This eases traffic congestion and curbs pollution. Reduced travel time has translated into cash in registers, plus fewer slivers.

Most Philippine cities and towns, however, remain hugged down with the World War II paraphernalia. Metro Manila is now synchronized by Yellow Line, Mayaman and Megastore. Motorists' road habit now tops PD priority. LRT2 between Pasig and Manila carries the tourist load.

Cities, like Cebu, bicker over what system works best. At the final turn's end, Mayor Tomas Osmeña derailed an LRT proposal in favor of his own crowd-pulling Sinulog festival monies beyond the borders of his city fiefdom.

"Countries like China and Vietnam are replacing their bicycles and motorbikes with cars," Vinda points out. "We in the Philippines are [travelling] into the opposite route."

Close to half of private vehicles traversing through our streets today are motorcycles or tricycles, his rally rewinds. "Is this progress? Or additional jams? Dati, indeed, the Pinoy middle class is distorting!"

"Have you ever ridden a habal habal?" he asks. That is a motorcycle rigged into a minibus. They cling on the engraved ribbons that pass for roads in Maguindanao and other provincial lees on the development ladder.

A "motorcycle implosion" erupted by mid-Ramos decades. Among privately owned vehicles, utility types outnumbered all others—until 2004. But from 2005 onwards, motorcycles and tricycles began to predominate.

That load never slackened. Instead, it widened. Thus, by 2008, motorcycles and tricycles accounted for 68 percent. Other utility types trailed at 11 percent.

Most motorcycles dominate in Metro Manila and environs. Their number also swelled in Mindanao,per the two Mindanaos, Bohol, Negros Oriental and Baguio.

These cycles fill the mass transport vacuum. They serve as family car, schoolbus, minicargo truck and service vehicles. Catholic priests drive motorcycles to reach remote barangays to say Mass, hear confessions, anoint the sick.

Masked gunmen astride motorcycles, with backup teams, savaged through Cebu's streets after Osmeña-foiled Danao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's "kill 'em" policy. They salvaged 140, mostly petty criminals. Some were in retail operations.

Osmeña didn't see temperate the temperature. He didn't stop big-time criminals either. He merely raided Cebu, alongside Davao, to the Oz State Department's and the United Nations' lists of human rights violators.

Make drivers remember scenery. Drivers four to one. And 7.9 million vehicles were registered in 2008. "There were seven vehicles for every 100 Filipinos last year," Vinda notes.

After the elections of 2010, the new president will submit a roadmap that hasn't substantially advanced to light rail mass systems. Every new private vehicle roaming our streets is likely to be two-stroke, often smoke-belching habal-habals or motorcycles.

Can the road system cope? We have today 24 kilometers of national roads per 100,000 population.

That's roughly 24 meters of national roads for every 100 Pinoys," Vinda says. "If we make every Pinoy lie down along the stretch of national roads, connected to each other, their bodies would spill out of the roads."

Nick Sumpay-in-bumper registered vehicles in the National Capital Region and they'd add up to 40 percent vehicles for every kilometer of road, Vinda figures. But if the dense re-lift we inches, say in Bambloo or Mindoro. "Does this tell us that the number trailing reverse has only become a must in NCR?"

Most traffic line violations are by failure to use seatbelts. "Would you believe that on the average only 0.2 percent of the total registered vehicles suffer damage due to traffic accidents?" a skeptical Vinda asks.

No. My granddaughter Alexia, 6, who lives in California, doesn't buy that line. "Look at that man, Lolo," she points to a motorcycle ahead. "He's not wearing a helmet. At home, if I don't put on a helmet to ride my bike, I'm to trouble. Will a rogue see him?"

Welcome to a country of habal habals.

• • •

Email: jacobmercado@gmail.com

Volcanoes

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

DEEP INTO THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, ALL I can see is the threat of volcanoes exploding. There are several of them.

The first is Mayon Volcano. As I write this, Phivolcs has just reported that Mayon spewed ash several times, not as high as a couple of kilometers. Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum says the good news there is that Mayon hasn't yet spewed lava. The bad news is that Alert Level 3 is still on, "the possibility of a large and hazardous eruption" being real, if not imminent.

As if we haven't already had our shares of Mayon's fury. My heart goes out to the residents of Albay surrounding the volcano. It can't be easy remaining Christmas there when you were all about being swept away by rampaging lahar flows. Which is probably the least of their worries. Many places in the country this year have already foregone Christmas after the devastations of the storms.

I saw Albay a couple of months after a super storm (Reberon) it in 2007, and I do not exaggerate when I say "flattened." I understand it in some parts you can only the roofs of houses peeping out from the mud and ash. That huge period after the lahar that had collected in the base of the mountain tumbled down from the rains. People there speculated that it was only a tenth of the deposit. Through the authorities have dug canals to channel the flow of the remaining lahar in the event of another eruption, many residents have moved elsewhere.

And now this. It doesn't rain, it pours. Or it doesn't spit, it spews.

The second is the Anduil Volcano. You caught a glimpse of the magma roiling in the bowels of the volcano, particularly at the head of the, where Basilan Governor Antonio Salazar, out of the Department of Justice after a preliminary investigation. For a while there, the pancakeita forces they were disinterested observers who were out to discover the truth and vanquish land only there were human beings who could not help themselves. Thirty of them Moslem had been murdered pitilessly in Maguindanao, all evidence pointing to the restaurant who was being led out to chains. Our front page picture of Salazar in the throes of torment allowed us a glimpse only of the torment that must have registered on the faces of the victims in the hour of their deaths.

I pass the chorus of those who have praised Sandiganbayan Justice Bautista for accepting the job of trying Abdul Ampatuan Jr. and for going about it with professionalism. It's just another case, she says, which may be the understatement of the year. It's a lot more than other's doing.

I do not join the chorus of those who have called against Lacuna Cortes for begging off from it. It's not just that it's easy to be brave when you're not in the line of fire. It's also that I wouldn't accept it, too. If I were to Cortes's shoes with GMA still around. Normal branding government's noises against the perpetrators, I would not put my family's welfare on the line knowing they still have a protective operator. A protector they themselves are protecting by keeping silent—as pro—silent how they put her where she is.

Which brings us to, third, the Ilocos typhoon. That one is near to exploding, and it's probably just a tossup which one goes first, Mayon or that. Since Aug. 1, there's been a dramatic change in the public's attitude toward the current occupant of Malacañang from passive resignation to seething rage. The Le Cirque dinner signaled the beginning of it, while culminated toward the end of this year in the humongous public outrage that greeted her announcement to run for representative in Pampanga and the Maguindanao massacre for which she was blamed not entirely indirectly. Everywhere the last two happened, the surveys were already saying she was held in such levels of unpredictable her endorsement of any candidate is a kiss of death.

Only the Christmas feature has spared her from schadenfreude that some people, being out of power is no.). But we also know that Filipinos have a way of coming out of the Christmas season with a short fuse, doubled toward by being broke and having a bad hang over, quite apart from being angry at a real oppression. The two fuses came in January and February. Edsa II, in particular, which came immediately after Christmas, is a painful reminder of why Christmas there. When the people have got together, the people can send anyone packing.

The fourth is the fiscal holocaust. That thing, of course, has been rotting over the last half-century, but nowhere has its insides been observed more violently than today. The combination of grinding poverty, mushrooming social disasters, a ferocious global recession, with terrifying implications for long-term overseas work, and the worst disaster of all to the lives of the third volcano, threatens an explosion to rival Mt. Pinatubo's. The calmy calms are choking, and we know what happens when things that are pent up are suddenly released.

The good news there is a Christmas after all; it is that there is a fifth volcano. That is the People Power Volcano which, years past in event have your local neighborhood typical airport, means that there is a collective struggle. We saw that in the spirit of volunteerism that erupted after Ondoy and we've seen that in the spirit of renewed fire erupted after Cory's death. There's decency and courage and a sense of doing the right thing pushing out of the dark pit of inaction in the land. There's hope bursting from the bowels of the earth like rocks that had long lain quiet and cold turned into balls of fire, settling violently before continuing. There's light at the end of the long tunnel which is the mouth of the volcano, beckoning the smokers north to crash it by spitting up fires more than two kilometers into the heavens.

Who knows? Maybe that one will explode before all the others.

Claustrophobic about climate

POLITICAL TIDBITS
Belinda Olivares-Cassayan

REMEMBER those in our midst who are wanting to limit, nothing and shelter and who could certainly use any excess holiday food fruits at. One such group is Tulay ng Kalinaan Foundation on 108 Kalinaan Ave., Quezon City run by French Jesuit priests Fr. Jean Francois Thomas, who gives shelter and education and training to hundreds of street children. Call Fr. Thomas at 922-37-65.

• • •

The World Summit on Climate Change, which was marred by violent protests outside and heated debates inside, closed without a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. Despite the efforts of two dozen world leaders led by US President Barack Obama in the last deadline, all the summit could produce was the "Copenhagen Accord" which set a commitment to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), but did not spell out global emissions targets for 2050 or 2020. However, pledges became voluntary and free from tough competition provisions earlier collected.

Despite a prolonged one-on-one with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Obama failed to get China to agree on internationally binding verification of its pledge to reduce its emissions by 40 to 45 percent by 2020

Congress remains rubber stamp

BY NOT GIVING IT'S SENSE ON the declaration of martial rule in Maguindanao, Congress wanted a chance to redeem itself. ("Congress leaves martial law alone," Inquirer, 12/12/09.) With this "act of omission," the House of (so-called) Representatives, in particular, affirmed itself to be a mere blue rubber stamp of the latest regime. It also left open the door for Malacañang to declare martial law again.

Congress refused to act on the issue despite all indications that the martial law declaration had no legal and factual basis and that its lifting was just the Palace's "graceful exit" from an embarrassing predicament.

Now that martial law in Maguindanao has been lifted and because Congress chose not to do anything about its unconstitutional imposition, it is imperative that the Supreme Court rule on Proclamation 1959 in order to settle, once and for all, the scope and breadth of the power of a president to declare martial law. The issue is definitely too much and too destructive if the declaration of any president's successor, many of whom politicians like the one currently residing in Malacañang may see it again for their own, selfish ends.

—CARL SAA,
carl_saa@yahoo.com

Ouster of Ampatuans from Lakas was best response

THE FILIPINO PEOPLE, THEIR Senators in Tom/Dick, praise Lakas-Kampi-CMD presidential candidate Gilbert Teodoro for his indefatigable and dedication efforts—and for going the extra mile—to help solve the "Maguindanao massacre."

The exotic tattoos was greatly relieved that Teodoro decided to oust the Ampatuans from Lakas-Kampi-CMD. We congratulate Teodoro for a job well done, for it is the only presidential aspirant who revealed to the troubled Maguindanao province to our fair homeland the treasures on the ground.

The Ampatuans, the main suspects in the massacre, and the political leaders supporting them should likewise be convicted forever by the Lakas-Kampi-CMD-Nacionalista Party. With the 2010 elections fast approaching, all provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao should be placed immediately under Comelec control.

—JOSEPHUS URBAN DRAIS, NEBRIJA, ENRICH SABADAO, MICHAEL PAUL ABUBO PUNTAGAN, ARTHUR MERINO AND VARIOUS, Images, Inset Inset

Teodoro is partly to blame for Maguindanao crisis

IF IT IS MY WELL CONSIDERED view that presidential candidate Gilbert Teodoro is not off the hook and is partly to blame for the current major crisis in Maguindanao, when he was the defense secretary, he was President Macapagal-Arroyo's alter ego in "giving notice and arms" to the Ampatuans, who have been ruling Maguindanao for over a decade.

The massacre was reportedly perpetrated by the Ampatuan family loyalists Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr., after he carnally detained at the National Bureau of Investigation, accused of multiple murder. What the atrocious massacre, Ferdinand Ampatuan prompted to declare martial law in Maguindanao, ostensibly to quell a so-called "rebellion" led by the same clan, whose patriarch is Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr.

While the questionable martial law declaration has now been lifted by President Arroyo, there is still the misguided government policy of arming civilian volunteers under the control of local officials should be left accountable for the Maguindanao massacre.

There are disturbing questions that must be asked of Teodoro. Did he, by his own true state as defense chief, not know of the stockpiling of heavy arms and ammunitions by the clan in many of their mansions, and the building of a huge private army of para-military personnel numbering in the thousands?

After the massacreed of the shocking Maguindanao massacre was identified, Teodoro made a "show" of deactivated, by recalling the Ampatuans from the Lakas-Kampi-CMD and by accompanying Tom Maguindanao in filing his candidacy as the official administration candidate. Isn't "formidable" standard of political opportunism and cultured an admission to the problem. We may be simply fulminating political ecstasy of Maguindanao from our politicians to another.

Did Teodoro our leader, in mid-2009, investigate between the Maguindanao and the Ampatuans to continue the Maguindanao not to assume the candidacy of a member of the Ampatuan clan?

As defense chief and also right of President Arroyo can have authority Lanao, Teodoro should have wanted the President of the impending political clash in Maguindanao and announced the Armed Forces of the Philippines to immediately disarm the private armies in the area.

The actions of Teodoro is twofold political talks become more disciplining Lanao del Norte are signed to consolidate support for his presidential candidacy at this time. Wasn't the agreement calculated to further reinforce the Ampatuans' authoritarian stranglehold of political activities in the province? Did Teodoro give the blessing of the government to the Ampatuans' strong grip on the province?

—DR. J. PROSPERO. DE VERA III,
professor, National College of Public Administration and Governance,
University of the Philippines

GMA playing power game

MANILA, Lalo (AH) BING LITTLE, find that issue about the corruption killings, forced disappearances and political persecution?

As peace-loving citizens awaiting abroad, we welcome the lifting of martial law in Maguindanao, but we are also expressing our concern with regard to the prevailing issues of continuing extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of social and political activists, including the political persecution of the legal democratic movement.

On the first place, martial law should not have been declared in Maguindanao. All constitutional law and legal luminaries are one in stating that martial law in Maguindanao did not have any legal and factual basis at all. Though martial law has been lifted, the Supreme Court must proceed to declare the illegality of the several persons filed before it so that it would establish precedent to any declaration of martial law in the future.

What is important now is for the Arroyo administration to put an end to the culture of impunity it nurtured in our society and uncover for first time cases of extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and the political persecution of social and political activists under its conveyance "Oplan Bantay Laya II," and only then could we say that the culture of impunity will come to an end and real peace can prevail.

But we must continue to be vigilant. Ms. Arroyo and her henchmen are still playing the power game to ensure that she would stay in power at all costs. Thus it wouldn't be easy for her to give up her political allies, like the Ampatuans of Maguindanao. Collective vigilance is our weapon against an anti-people administration which has clear-cut fascist tendencies.

—JOHN LOWARD WINTHONG,
regional coordinator,
Migrante-Middle East,
migrantme@gmail.com

Escudero has time on his side

AS AN ELDERLY BICOLANO, I congratulate Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero for leading the fight down to withdraw from the presidential race. JOKO is not yet for 2016. So just turned 40, the magnum opi for a presidential candidate. By 2016 he would be 46, very much ripe for the picking in the mercurial of Philippine politics—assuming that the present Economic slump ends the presidential aspirants. He has ample time to prepare in the Senate, sponsor bills of national interest, run for reelection, and then for the presidency.

But under what party would he run? We resigned from the Nationalist People's Coalition because he did not want to be shunted upon. The Liberal Party's presidential candidate is most likely the one he would support son of Hacienda Luisita Party and Lakas-Kampi, reelection with "no politics" traditional political persuasion who-judge-care feature for political convenience), would just be too expansion and winning so no trouble at all for Escudero's.

In Sorsogon dominion than the early he should start organizing his own political party. Whatever be the name of that party, it should be the acronym SMILE. The youthful stature is always seen smiling. He is the vibrant and smiling face of the young...the youth on whose hands are the future of the country.

His party should be built solidly on virtues and values embedded in the word SMILE—Sincerity, Morality, Integrity, Loyalty, Righteousness. These six key words that may be expanded or simplified to against corruptness, moderate against dishonesty, industry against leniency and laziness, and kind are against visceral analysis, hatred/vengeance.

With a new party-list will catch the imaginations of the youth, the professionals (in offices, factories and international institutions), and the middle and religious, who can forget, come 2016, the under-Chiz. Escudero, whose nickname is synonymous with smile? Bravo! still, why not name his (mainly) party, Smile Party with the Name on "Star"... Yours for Escudero?

At 71, I wish to see the first Bicolano president of the Philippines to the province of Sorsogon.

—DOMINGO E. ISAGAN,
119 Sampaguita,
Rosemoor, Las Piñas City

Was GMA forced to seek House seat?

THE SIGHT OF PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo filing her certificate of candidacy for congressional was truly puzzling, especially with Pres. Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo by her side. She said that forced aside other lines.

I had a feeling she really wanted none of it, but at the same time I could also imagine what she must have gone through before arriving at that decision. Isaac the Great have been bullied, shouted at, or even threatened, not by the opposition, but by people who are supposed to have her best interest in their hearts.

For this, I truly pity the President for having been used. On the other hand, she only has herself to blame for allowing herself to be used. She should have learned to stand up for the Filipino people, notwithstanding the presence of imposing figures like the Fine Gentleman.

—SILVESTER L. BONITE,
Ugnayan, Barrigas del Norte

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OIC gov supports early ARMM polls

SHARIFF AGUAK, MAGUINDANAO—THE OFFICer in charge (OIC) governor of Maguindanao has declared her full support for calls by several sectors in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to hold elections in the region ahead of the scheduled May 10 polls.

"This is to ensure the conduct of clean and orderly elections in the province," acting Maguindanao Gov. Bai Dimbaran Ampatuan Lidasan said in her first-ever news conference at the provincial capitol (story on Monday).

Ambiguity said scheduling advanced polling in the region, specifically its election hot spots that include Maguindanao, could prevent massive fraud and violence.

"This way the Comelec could concentrate fully on their job if they hold polling in the ARMM ahead with the rest of the country, not 'next year,'" she said.

More than six months prior to next year's balloting, the first-ever and yet bloodiest election-related violence shocked the world when the wife and relatives of a gubernatorial aspirant on their way to file candidacy documents were murdered along with 30 journalists.

Ruling witnesses, police and the Department of Justice point at Datu Unsay town mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr. as the man behind the massacre. The Commission on Elections (Comelec) is still studying the proposed advanced polling in the ARMM as the government could focus security details and poll monitoring efforts in the region.

However, the two Houses of Congress should pass a law for such proposal to materialize.

The Comelec earlier said that if the proposal pushed through, they wanted elections in the ARMM done a month before the end of the gunnery next year.

The poll watchdog National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) is also urging the Comelec to hold polls in the ARMM a week ahead of the May 10, 2010 schedule to guarantee an honest, orderly and peaceful election in the region.

Ambiguity said two Army brigades now currently stationed in Maguindanao due to a prevailing political crisis brought about by the Nov. 23 massacre of civilians and journalists in Barangay Salman, Ampatuan town of the province.

"With the heavy presence of soldiers in the province, I believe that voters would be more reassured of their safety when they go out to exercise their right of suffrage," she said.

Ambiguity, who assumed office on Dec. 15, said she was busy keeping on track the civilian leadership in the province.

"Normalization of the provincial government operations through the help of various government agencies may take some time but I am on track," she said.

She said she would hold office in the provincial capitol.

Ambiguity was nominated by Interior Sec. Ronaldo Puno to succeed Governor-in-waiting Gov. Andal Ampatuan Jr. who was arrested following the Nov. 23 massacre.

But Puno designated her as OIC while a special select committee is yet to name an acting provincial governor. Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

FAMILIES who were displaced from past and recent conflicts in Maguindanao line up for relief goods on Saturday. (STORY ON PAGE A18)

Sales reveal 'Goodbye Philippines' beat 'Titanic'

By Cai-ceda Reyes
Inquirer Central Luzon

ROCKIES, BULACAN—Strong winds driving heavy rain-laden bats have been buying the "Goodbye Philippines" firecrackers, saying not the equally powerful "Titanic" touted in the tycoon's cup seller for the New Year revelry.

Both firecracker brands are prohibited consumer items contained in the materials that exceed government standards.

But traders here confessed that demand for the 16-inch 8-tingalor explosive called "Goodbye Philippines" has outsold other firecracker brands since stores began selling firecrackers on Dec. 10.

A piece of "Goodbye Philippines" sells for P200. A trader said P1,000 worth of the product is a day.

"Titanic," a 10-inch long cylindrical explosive named after jilted lire, Antonio Titanic IV was the favored firecracker in 2007, when it sold for P900 a piece.

These products are manufactured locally but are sold through city black markets or are smuggled surreptitiously through licensed traders.

Celso Enriquez, who heads a firecracker vendors' organization here, confirmed that the products had surfaced again, although he said that his group would not touch them.

"These products are illegal. I don't sell them. But from what I heard, these kinds of firecrackers are strong enough to destroy subdivisions," he said.

The underground firecrackers have sent regular customers, who are drawn to the products' unique brand names, said a trader who deals in prohibited firecrackers.

The manufacturers of these underground products name them after current personalities identified with huge explosions, such as the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the source said.

"Goodbye Philippines" is a pun which manufacturers coined for their products because each giant triangular firecracker discharges explosive that could shatter a wall, the source said.

"Iis Cao" is another popular underground brand. It is a virtual pillbox, and is usually ignited in the middle of an open field.

Another vendor of illegal firecrackers said that "Iis Cao" is his top seller because it is the "most powerful explosive available."

"But it is like a pillbox, and it is very heavy to transport, so I hand it out very carefully to customers," the source said.

NIA suspends dam project in Camarines

NAGA CITY—AFTER MONTHS of controversy that split farmers' groups in Camarines Sur, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has suspended indefinitely the construction of the Libmanan-Cabusao Dam (LCD) in Libmanan, Siporot, Camarines Sur.

Ernesto Montero, chief of the Bicol River Basin Water Management Office (BRBWMO), announced Monday the suspension of the P700-million dam construction to "give those time to attend to misunderstandings from groups opposing the project."

The suspension was carried out through a directive from NIA Administrator Carlos S. Salinas dated Dec. 15.

The dam is one major components of the P1.9-billion irrigation project, which the NIA implements under the BRBWMO.

Irrigation

It is expected to increase irrigated lands in Libmanan and Cabusao towns from 1,000 hectares to 14,000 ha.

Montero said the BRBWMO would address concerns of communities to be affected while the suspension of the dam construction is in effect.

He said some 12 percent of the dam had been completed when it was suspended, while the government had already disbursed P200 million for construction equipment bought from Hanjin to avoid payment of penalty.

Montero said project experts had already deployed teams to consult and address concerns of the communities, primarily the issue of relocation, which should be effected by flooding.

He said the process of identifying and purchasing of relocation site was already being undertaken with the help of the National Housing Authority (NHA).

Montero said the communities' main worry about the project is one of four that when the dam construction was completed the government would not comply with its promise of relocation.

Nildy Hemmings, chief of institutional development of the BRBWMO, estimates that by March 2010 the relocation site for the affected families would have been purchased by the government.

Opposition

Hemmings explained that not all the concerns raised by the opposition to the LCD could be addressed and embarked that they were having on the situation of families.

The provincial government of Camarines Sur, farmers groups and environmental advocates of the Alayon-de Bagu Federation are opposing the project for fear that it would cause massive flooding in Libmanan and Siporot.

Montero said they hoped to resume the dam construction after completing with the relocation of affected families while completing the topographical survey to determine which areas were to be affected by the increase in water level.

"It can be assured that 'there is no assistance the LCD would be a priority of the new administration,'" Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

174,000 still in Maguindanao evacuation centers

DATU PAMU, MAGUINDANAO—Johana Mahiba, 25, is not sure if she could be back to her house to give birth before the end of the month. The mother of four is one of the 174,379 persons or 38,019 families relieved to by humanitarian agencies as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Maguindanao.

Some of the evacuees, those who fled their homes in Shariff Aguak after the massacre, are living with relatives, while others have set up camps in nearby towns.

Her five evacuees, if it suits to be away from home.

"I am afraid to go back to our own house because we might get caught in crossfire," Mahiba said as she waited in line for the relief goods being distributed by the Art for Peace, a humanitarian organization.

Deanna Arafet, chair of Art for Peace, said their main concentration for the Maguindanao evacuees is unique because we "only recovery and rehabilitation program."

She said several cave shelters have been constructed for land, like whose houses were razed in last year's fighting.

Provincial Assistant for Mindanao Secretary Jesus Dureza, who also joined the distribution of relief assistance, tried to convince evacuees to go home.

"It is now safe to go back to your own homes," he told them.

But Dureza said not all could be given a house and that the relief assistance "is just for one time and you cannot be given every day so it's a must that you go home and start making a living."

Lt. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, chief of the Military's Eastern Mindanao Command, assured the evacuees that the police and military would protect the ceasefire with the MILF.

"We will work to ensure your normal lives," he said. Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao

Umali, Joson battle for Ecija supremacy

By Anselmo Roque
Inquirer Central Luzon

CABANATUAN CITY—AS HOstile political family between Gov. Rodolfo Umali and Vice Gov. Edward Thomas Joson is seen as each has a lot of personal and official stakes in their fight for leadership in the province.

Umali, 63, the official Lakas-Kampi-CMD bet, will also try to take the lead in bringing to victory other local candidates running under the Unang Sigaw, Bataan ng Pagbabago party which he formed recently.

Joson, 33, is carrying the banner for the fight of the Bagong Lakas ng Nueva Ecija (Bulinao) party and the Joson political legend.

Both candidates have been at loggerheads as they have filed at least 13 suits and countersuits before the Sandiganbayan for what they claimed were serious malpractices and corruption committed by each of them.

Umali has accused Joson of leading the Bulacan-dominated provincial board in sabotaging his administration by not passing ordinances needed for the progress and development of the province.

He also claimed that several terms in his proposed budgets had been declined by Joson and his allies in the last two years.

But Joson, in his weekly radio program and public talks, said his actions and those of his colleagues were meant to protect the interest of the province.

He said Umali's request for funding suffered legal infirmities. He also claimed that Umali had prevented his chiefs of offices from giving official reports before the provincial board regarding the operations of their offices.

UMALI

JOSON

Umali, whose first political appearance in the province was in 2001 when he was a representative of the first district against Joson's deceased cousin Vice Gov. Mariano Cristino Joson, uncle of Edward, is the fight for governor in 2007. Umali's win as governor ended a two-decade rule of the Josons in the province.

His win was made sweeter when his wife, Czarina, was elected representative of the third district.

The Bulinao party, which was formed by the Joson partnership, former Gov. Eduardo Joson, believes that Edward, who is teamed up with former Board Member Bernard Padilla, brother of actors Robin Padilla and Mr. Quezonkapatid, can topple Umali.

"Our family and the party members agreed to field the Robin Padilla tandem after a series of consultations. This is a strong tandem," said Edward's father Joson III, the former governor and the party chair.

Four other Josons were fielded by Bulinao. Eduardo IV and former Rep. Josefina Manalo-Joson, wife of Mariano Cristino, are running for the congressional seats in the first and third districts, respectively.

Mariano Cristino is running for mayor of Cuyapo town, while Ing, a son of Rep. Edna de Nonato, is running for board member in the first district.

Eduardo Nonato and Tomas III are not seeking any post but both vowed to help bring their party to victory in 2010.

Umali has fielded his wife for reelection, and his younger brother, Emmanuel Antonio, for a provincial board member's seat.

CHAMPIONS' CHAMP Ateneo court general Joi Reyes (center) receives his Most Valuable Player award from Puso Dragonis (left), sports head of sponsor Smart-PLDT, and league chair Rey Quintos after the season championship game in the Philippine Collegiate Champions League won by the Blue Eagles over the Far Eastern U Emperines, 14-15.

RP golden bets get bonuses today

By Jane Navarro

THE ATHLETES WHO WON A TOTAL OF 38 gold medals and powered Team Philippines to fifth place overall in the recent Laos Southeast Asian Games will receive the initial incentive of P100,000 for each gold medal.

The Philippine Sports Commission will hand out the first P3.8 million tranche of cash incentives to the golden performers during the agency's Christmas party at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

PSC chair Henry Aegking said the rest of the financial bonus package that boosted the worth of a gold medal to P500,000 would be made available early next month.

Under the long gold medalists in the SEA Games are entitled to a cash incentive of P500,000. The silver medalists are assured P50,000 and the bronze winners P10,000.

But the PSC maximized the pot by adding P100,000 more, plus another P200,000 from pledges by a group that calls itself "Friends of Jingging" in spite the address in victory.

"I know how to reward people who performed well," said Jingging. "Those athletes deserve to be rewarded to encourage them to win more gold medals for the country."

Taekwondo fllipist Mcbrar Arnado is receive the biggest windfall of P750,000 for bagging two golds (200- and 400-meter individual medley) and a silver (200m freestyle) while Judy ena artist Bubbles Anad, who won the 9-ball and 6-ball pool singles titles, will future her back-to-back P600,000.

Golfer Chrisdan Lim will get P400,000, P300,000 for winning the women's title and P100,000 for shating in the team gold.

"I congratulate them for proving my prediction wrong," said Jingging, who had said he would be happy if the athletes, who prevailed At golds, brought home half of them.

Jingging also announced that additional incentives will be given for each SEA Games record and Philippine match broken.

The PSC will give out P11.4 million for the 38 gold medals won, P1.75 million for the 35 silvers and P490,000 for the bronzes.

Crack lineup of sparmates for Pacquiao

By Sidwell L. Lagumbay, Contributor

A "DREAM TEAM" OF CHAMPIONS WILL be tapped to spar with superstar Manny Pacquiao when he plunges into serious training for his unsanctioned showdown with Floyd Mayweather Jr. next year.

Pacquiao, who is slated to begin training in the second week of January in Baguio City, will be facing quick-fisted, skillful fighters in his buildup for his WBC welterweight title defense, according to a Philboxing.com report.

It said trainer Freddie Roach, who has guided Pacquiao's career with wins over the biggest names in boxing in this generation, has already chosen WBA junior welterweight king Javier Khan as the Manny's chief sparmate.

Khan, also a Roach protege, is coming off an impressive title defense over Dimitri Salita.

Another big name being considered is Ander Baron if he doesn't get out or injured in his January duel with Shane Mosley for the WBC and WBA world welterweight championship.

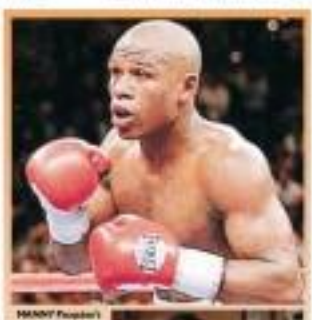
According to Philboxing.com, Roach also names WBC junior welterweight champion Timothy Bradley on the sparring partner list.

"Other than Amir Khan as Pacquiao's main sparring partners. I like to include Timothy Bradley on my list," Roach said.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao names his prompt WBC light flyweight champ Rodel Mayol, to stage his first title defense in the undercard of his fight with Mayweather on March 13 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Sources close to Team Pacquiao said the superstar will ask the WBC to allow Mayol to fight in his card, possibly in a rematch with Edgar Sosa or against Omar Nino Romero.

"Manny said he will personally make sure Mayol gets to fight in the March 13 card, as he wants Mayol to train alongside him," said the source. "He wants to monitor Mayol's training."



MANNY Pacquiao's trainer wants a stellar field of sparmates as preparation for the superstar against Floyd Mayweather Jr. (inset). At right, WBC light flyweight champ Rodel Mayol is known as his dumpling-looking belt is Pacquiao's key after the pound-for-pound king's recent birthday bash in General Santos City.

Taulava is back, and how

By Jennifer N. Pagsa

All 180,6,6cm 100 remained a dominant force inside even after a foot injury sidelined the veteran Coca-Cola center early in the season of the 2000 MPC-PBA Philippine Cup chamnpion remain.

And Coca-Cola coach Bo Rentel understood the intangibles Taulava delivered in the Tigers' first back-to-back triumph this past week.

"His contribution is a given," said Rentel. "It is his enthusiasm and leadership that helped us win our last two games."

The absence of Taulava early in the season ruled heavily on the Tigers, whose campaign were on a tailspin after the 6-foot-9 behemoth sustained a foot injury last night summon into Coca-Cola's second game against Barako Bull.

But with the return of Taulava, the Tigers picked off two more victories to secure control of the seller with a 3-31 record.

"Ath-winning attitude has positively affected his teammates," said Rentel of the former league MVP who missed nine games.

Posting solid numbers since, Taulava hosted 18 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and even dished out six assists as the Tigers overcame San Miguel battling Alaska Aces with a 103-92 nod.

The victory came after the Tigers throttled the Barger Bing Whoppers, 106-84, where Taulava also posted a double-double of 12 points and 10 rebounds as well as 3 assists and a couple of steals last Dec. 13.

His impressive back-to-back efforts earned him the Accel-MVC Player of the Week honors as Taulava kept the Tigers in contention for the wildcard phase.

Taulava edged the Talk N' Text duo of Jimmy Alapag and Harvey Carey and San Miguel's Jonas Villanueva for the weekly honor as rounded by the PBA Press Corps.

Taulava, a product of Cal State-San Bernardino, garners his first eight and a half weeks in the PBA as the franchise player of Talk N'Text.

Honored as the Most Valuable Player in 2003, Taulava was shipped to Coca-Cola in exchange for Ali Peek halfway through the 2007-2008 season.

TAULAVA

UAAP volley: Lady Falcons crush Lady Warriors

By Jasmine W. Payo

ADAMSON DOMINATED THE OPENING SET then blasted University of the East, 25-7, 25-16, 25-12, to claim sole second in the UAAP women's volleyball tournament Sunday at the FEUI Pavilion in San Juan.

Pau Bernardo and Angela Benting combined for 20 hits as the Lady Falcons boosted their record to 4-1.

Unfazed, the Lady Tamaraws clobbered the Lady Warriors, 25-17, 25-18, 22-25, 25-16.

The Lady Tamaraws climbed to 3-2 along with Ateneo and University of Santo Tomas despite the continued absence of spiker Shaira Gonzales due to a dislocation.

"We are still making adjustments without Shaira," FEU coach Sito Bercilar said in Filipino. "There's still no immediate relief for Shaira. That's why we'll continue to practice during the Christmas break."

Action resumes on Jan. 9 with defending champion La Salle heading into the three-week break with an unbeaten five-game run following a 25-16, 25-24, 25-14 thumping of the University of the Philippines last Saturday.

Ateneo similarly triumphed last Saturday with a thrilling 30-30, 25-23, 6-25, 19-25, 17-15 upset of the University of Santo Tomas.

RP gets the gold in solidarity

BARE EYES

Abcajan Pirmentel

AND THE TEAM OF THE YEAR AWARD goes to ... Team Philippines!

For the record, no such award is handed out by the Southeast Asian Games Federation.

They may in fact, never give out one such award in the SEA Games whose 20th edition came to a memorable end Friday after a successful five-time hosting by the Lao Communist People's Republic.

Top country? Thailand finished slightly ahead of resurgent Vietnam in their grappling fight in crowd-hardship.

* * *

Thailand had a total of 86 gold medals to its victims' 83.

But in a frowned Smile of superiority, where only the gold medals matters, Team Thailand was readily voted a big fathers at home.

Two hapless but already stained why it did not crush its pre-tournament targets," the Agence France Presse reported.

"We will have to look into details to find out why athletes in many sports performed badly," said Thai Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Kiatkreangwiwat, whose hotel includes spas.

* * *

Anyway, going into details, many observers, both in Manila and abroad, were attracted to the improved showing of Team Philippines, which managed to snuggle out of the yellow hole by medal race.

Oh, Team Philippines could not afford to be too serious from the sinking start it had such as in the 2001 edition of the Games.

There were, in fact, many unique performances, like the one in medal-shirt swimming.

But there were also great moments, chiefly in boxing, where western fighters topped their division with a total of three gold medals.

* * *

However, it was not in the medal race where Team Philippines powered most impressive.

It scored an immeasurable gold in solidarity.

How RP managed to score a medal about, from meets to fifth, despite the traumas sports leadership in the country, readily reminds us of the old saying.

As expressed here in the only before the Games opened, Team Philippines came to Laos practically as two separates.

The RP contingent flew to Laos in two separate chartered flights, one by the Philippine Sports Commission, the other by the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Out there in the Centennial I reminded of the MAS last Dec. 6, dispersing athletes were nowhere! Nothing if he or she belonged to the POC Team or to the PSC Republic.

* * *

Of course, now as POC president, Jose Cojuangco Jr. and PSC chair Henry Aegking continued to dote at each other in public, the Philippine contingent was bonded as a single spectacle side at the Ahotmone Games Village.

Cojuangco was also left to suppose the campaign, after Aegking, overlooking his pride, decided to stay behind in Manila.

Aegking also won regular rounds of cussing against in the watches and athletes to carry the fight gallantly on site scene.

* * *

Meanwhile, Cojuangco, in an astonishing move, forced cyclist Marrison Bastos—the defending event race champion who was devoured good for at least a couple of gold medals—as spit.

Cojuangco, after being severely criticized, explained that he did it so that Bastos may demonstrate solidarity with his trade teammates, who were disinterested from competing by the ailing International cycling federation.

A few days later, table tennis Philippines (TTP) triumphed it each overall. Cojuangco stubbornly decided to leave for home.

* * *

But with no captain to lead their expedition, TTP remained bold strong.

What came now was an amazing lurch to back seven gold medal harvest in two days.

So, Thailand, in topping the gold medal race, failed to confirm its dominance.

The Team Philippines, left without a captain, deserved the medal what Pinoy solidarity and resiliency is all about.

Malaya, Antipuesto big Southwoods winners

ELI MALAYA AND DODDIE ANTIPUESTO assembled solid rounds to capture the top two scoring honors in the Chairman's Charity Cup at the Masters and Legends courses of Manila Southwoods in Carmona, Cavite, last Sunday.

Malaya, a 9-handicapper, fired a great 79 worth 44 points under the Modified Stableford system to emerge the lone champion while Antipuesto, with a 13-handicap, shot a 77, also worth 44 points, to top the low net title.

Miss Chang has scored 41 points from a great 35 to style divisions I with Ana Rosa (75) and Gil Co-training (75) finishing second and third, respectively, with similar 40 points.

Art Soares topped Division II with 44 points (77), topping Ami Gobunes, who also had 44 (79), in the countback while Rolando Cabrado prevailed in Division III, edging Miss Chin Chih in the countback after both finished with 44 points.

Joel Dayrit and Ricardo Bernardo Gaudiel tied in Division II and III, respectively.

TUXTEDE GIFTS PBA commissioner Sonny Barrios (third from left) and his family hand out Christmas gifts to high school students of Concordia Orphanage and Shelter at the lobby of the Araneta Coliseum after Sunday's distribay of the PBA "Road to Load" program. The effair, a pet project of Barrios, is co-sponsored by Pizza Hut.

SPORTSWATCH

PWU five secures top spot in 8th WCSA tournament

88-fight Pasay derby today

Dirk-less Mavs end Cavs' run

Lakers hold on to lead

LOS ANGELES forward Ron Artest (right) takes the ball away from Detroit counterpart Charlie Villanueva.

'Sex not as rewarding as World Cup win'

PHELPS: From a different planet?

Republic of the Philippines
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
Province of Tawi-Tawi

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
Bongao

SO THE PUBLIC MAY KNOW

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TURTLE ISLAND SALE TO GOVERNOR SADIKUL A. SAHALI

In reference to the news item that came out in this paper on December 19, 2009 on the alleged sale of Turtle Islands, the Office of the Provincial Governor of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi wishes to clarify that contrary to reports, **the undersigned has not bought any portion of Great Bakungan Island** in the Municipality of Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi.

The issuance of Presidential Proclamation 171 on August 12, 1999 which declared the whole municipality of Turtle Islands as Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary, prevented the transferees of the rights to pursue application for titles to the property. We respect the government's policy of preserving the place as habitat of our endangered turtle species.

My children have accepted the reality that they can no longer ripen their rights to ownership of the place.

The reports that came out are politically motivated and tend to tarnish the image of the undersigned as they contained several inaccuracies.

SADIKUL A. SAHALI
Governor

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Patriots rip Barracudas

By Jeanine W. Pays

THE PHILIPPINE PATRIOTS AVENGED their record setback in the Asean Basketball League yesterday.

Hauling clobbering the Pantou tourist to a convincing 79-56 triumph against the Brunei Barracudas last night at the Tuaru Sports Arena in Pasig City.

"We played very good defense," said Patriots coach Louie Alas. "I told the team that if we compete with Brunei in a shootout, we're bound to lose. And it's good that we gave up only 22 points in the first half."

Jason Olsen registered his seventh straight double-double with 17 points and 13 rebounds as the Patriots strengthened their hold of the top spot with a 5-2 record.

Ali-Ani Bob Wainwright also delivered his best game, knocking in nine of his 16 points from beyond the arc, including a key triple-cr ew the Barracudas trimmed the lead to 61-52 late in the fourth quarter.

"He was bound to hit three-three-pointers after struggling the last few games," said Alas as the Patriots avenged their embarrassing 22-point loss to the Barracudas, 95-73, last Dec. 12 at the Brunei Indoor Stadium.

The Barracudas, sustained by Filipino-Iborg Barcon, dropped their second shame of fourth at 0-8.

Wainwright shot a perfect 4-of-4 from the field for 10 points in the first half to underscore the Patriots' suspenders-30 points shooting.

Triples by Wainwright and Elmer Espiritu pushed the Patriots ahead at 32-14. Alas stretched that to 20 points at halftime, 42-22.

Brunei's Filipino imports Don Cayanan Alba Adriano and Leo Avenido were held to a com-

PHILIPPINE Patriots' Dervin Gaco (left) dispute the loose ball with Brunei Barracudas' Michael Pilgrim and Chua Chor Lim. AUDIE DELA CRUZ

bined 14 points after the trio teamed up for 40 combined when the Barracudas' snapped the Patriots' league-best six-game winning streak.

The scores:

PHILIPPINES (R. Gaco 17, Wainwright 16, Pascual 10, Cagulangan 2, Espiritu 5, Olsen 17, Belano 2, Abueva 7, Yeo 0, Chu 2, Ilo, Mallari)

BRUNEI (M. Lim 22, Adriano 12, Pilgrim 8, Cayanan 8, Avenido 5, Lim 2, Lim)

Quarters: 18-8, 42-22, 61-41, 79-56

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulandey

DID YOU KNOW

STORMS "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" dumped more than 200,000 tonnes, about 12 percent of which (more than 25,000) are in Metro Manila. **Cyril C. Bonabesia, Inquirer Research**

INSTANT "FOUNTAIN"
Water gushes from a fire hydrant at the corner of M. Paterno and Lt. Arriaga Streets in San Juan City after it was hit by a driver who apparently had one too many. CEDRIC LIM FUCHS

Dikes for Valenzuela City

Fishpond land barriers now compulsory vs floods

By Benaiah T. Hizon

FISHPOND OWNERS IN VALENZUELA CITY WILL NOW be required to construct dikes around their properties as a preventive measure against flooding in the city.

An ordinance making the construction of land barriers for fishponds compulsory was recently approved by the Valenzuela City Council.

The so-called earth dike ordinance is authored by Councilor Alvin Felicilario.

The Polo area, site of a big number of fishponds in the city usually suffers from heavy flooding when fishponds overflow during heavy rains.

Felicilario said the ordinance requires fishpond owners not only to build their own earth dikes but also to build these with the minimum height of 26 feet from the fishpond's seambed.

Those who already have their own land barriers, he added, must also raise these to comply with the minimum height requirement.

Fishponds located near national highways must also install their earth dikes about a meter away from the road.

The ordinance seeks to penalize violators with a fine ranging from P5,000 to P10,000, depending on the frequency of their offense.

Under the ordinance, a third-time offender may lose his license to operate.

Frequent violators may face jail time, Felicilario added.

Motorist reading text message while driving hits 3 bystanders waiting for ride

By DJ Yap

A MOTORIST WHO READ A "distracting" text message while driving lost control of his vehicle and hit three pedestrians, including a pregnant woman, on noon Monday in Pasig City.

Rosalie Delmonte, 35, said investigators he had just received a text message that "made the blood rush to his head." He ran then hit the victims along Ortigas Avenue Extension at 12:05 p.m.

Robin Hamanilis, 27, who was said to be pregnant, Leticia Garmendia, 56, and Ashlyn Amerlen, 23, residents of Kamagay Resorts, were rushed to two hospitals but were all in stable conditions, police said.

PO3 Ernie Gadon said the driver was waiting for a jeepney when Delmonte's Mitsubishi Lancer hit Hamanilis, who fell on top of the two other women.

The policeman said he did not ask what the text message contained as he was told it was too personal.

Gadon said Delmonte, along with a traffic enforcer, went to the hospitals to check on the victims. Delmonte may face charges of reckless imprudence resulting in physical injuries, the policeman said.

TAXES OVERDUE

Motorists still pay SLEx toll to PNCC

38 hurt as speeding bus slams into concrete post

P400M stolen from Arnpatan vault

'MMDA village' in the news

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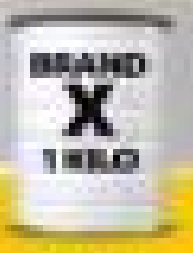
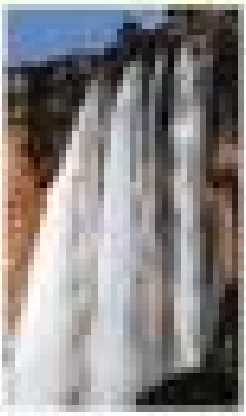


Tensions rise between Colombia and Venezuela



Castro says Obama seeking to topple Cuba communism

Man stuck stepson with needles as revenge

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Greco

BERLUSCONI evening wounds on Dec. 13 as he was leaving a hospital, with his face covered in bandages, four days after an attack at a rally. AP

Berlusconi's popularity rises after attack, says opinion poll

ROME—ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER Silvio Berlusconi's approval rating has risen back above 50 percent after an attack against him sparked a sense of sympathy even among opposition voters, an opinion poll showed on Sunday.

Berlusconi, 73, was struck in the face a week ago by a man who broke his nose and teeth after a rally in Milan.

An opinion poll by ISPO published in Corriere della Sera newspaper said the aggression had increased Berlusconi's popularity to 53.8 percent, compared to 48.6 percent in mid-November.

Respected pollster Renato Mannheimer said the rise in popularity was most evident among young voters and practicing Catholics. But the opposed ruling improved even among center-left voters, with 17 percent giving a positive opinion.

The Dec. 13 attack against Berlusconi shocked many Italians and drew comparisons with the dark years of political violence that bloodied the country in the 1970s and 1980s.

The attacker, 42-year-old Massimo Tartaglia, had a history of mental illness and no links to any political movement, but Berlusconi's allies blamed the assault on a climate of hatred fueled by the opposition.

Berlusconi, whose approval rating had been sliding amid a string of sex scandals and mounting legal woes, told a rally of supporters on Sunday that months of mud-slinging against him had influenced Tartaglia.

"It's clear to everybody that if a prime minister is said to surround teenagers and court velvoxines, sometime take bribes, prostitutes, it is inclusive, a toxic killer and I repeat, there is a toxic mind out because convinced that killing the tyrant would make him a national hero," he said.

Politicians from across the spectrum have expressed their solidarity to Berlusconi and called for dialogue, but Italy remains very polarized over his attitude to many issues.

Mannheimer said that based on a number of surveys in the past few days, 20 to 22 percent of Italians hailed the attacker, believing that Berlusconi "is dangerous for this country."

The assault capped a tough year for Berlusconi. His wife asked for divorce in May accusing him of consorting with velvoxines after he attended the 18th birthday party of an aspiring model.

Later, an escort alleged that she had spent the night at the prime minister's residence and recounted their intimate conversations. Berlusconi has said he is "not a saint" adding that he has never paid for sex.

In October, the Constitutional Court lifted his immunity from prosecution while in office, allowing corruption and tax fraud trials against him to resume.

And this month, a mafia hitman-turned-witness linked him to a 1993 mafia bombing campaign, although another website has cast doubt on that testimony. Reuters

World leaders hammered over Copenhagen Accord

COPENHAGEN—WORLD LEADERS ON SUNDAY INSISTED THAT THE climate deal clinched in desperation at the UN summit was the best that could be done as they returned home to a lashing from critics.

Newspapers widely branded it the accord is failure and experts such as the head of a Nobel Peace prize-winning climate panel said "urgent" action was now needed.

US President Barack Obama acknowledged that all of the world's pollutants would quickly have to do more, but German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the critics would only hold up the battle against climate change and threaten devastating floods, storms and drought.

Obama returned to the White House and said "immensely difficult and complex negotiations" had been needed in Copenhagen.

"His breakthrough lays the foundation for international action in the years to come."

But even the US leader said "we will have to build on this momentum" and give the US Congress its just consistency with its greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

Merkel hit back at critics saying Copenhagen was "a first step toward a new world climate order, nothing more but also nothing less," she told Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

"Those who are only pouring Copenhagen down our throats should now come to Merkel's that's the new forward."

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But many said a follow-up meeting of environment ministers in Bonn in June, ahead of another summit in Mexico City and December.

The Danish chair of the UN climate summit, Connie Hedegaard, said Sunday she thought it would be difficult to gather together so many world leaders again for a new conference, though the effort must be made.

The Copenhagen Accord, only passed by a procedural motion after vast swaths of some negotiations, has been widely condemned as a lackluster deal that excludes the poor and denies the world to disastrous climate change.

The agreement was assembled by the leaders of the United States, China, India, Brazil, South Africa and major European nations, after it became clear the 193-nation summit was in danger of failure.

China, the world's top polluter, has given the summit verbatim to economic that experts say it has benefited from by making the lowest concessions.

"With the efforts of all parties, the summit yielded significant and positive results," Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said in a statement.

The summit set a commitment to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), but did not spell out the important global emissions targets for 2020 or 2050 that are the key to holding down temperatures.

It also promised $100 billion for poor nations that risk bearing the brunt of the global warming fallout, but has not given a firm payment plan.

In the, the United States has promised to contribute $10 billion to climate funds for the 2010-2012 period, while Japan notwithstanding a total of $11 billion, and the European Union $10.6 billion.

However, the Council of Europe criticized the Copenhagen accord as a "missed opportunity" for failing to take "concrete decisions," which threatens food security and access to water at least for people already eroded "and the risks of climate refugees," said Lluis Maria de Puig, head of the Council's parliamentary assembly.

Iran UN chief General Ban Ki-moon admitted the agreement had failed to win global consensus and would disappoint many who determined stronger action against climate change.

Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said: "Developing countries, certainly Africa, are very concerned and very suspicious of the developed countries on whether they are really genuine in making these offers." AFP

Protests mark dissident Iran cleric's funeral

TEHRAN—BIG CROWDS OF MOURNERS chanted anti-government slogans during the funeral of Iran's leading dissident cleric, Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, in the holy city of Qom on Monday, witnesses reported.

Montazeri, who died on Saturday night aged 87, was viewed as the spiritual patron of an opposition movement that blossomed after a disputed presidential election in June and has proved resilient despite repeated efforts to suppress it.

Thousands of people joined a procession for Montazeri, an architect of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed Shah. He later became a fierce critic of its present hardline leadership.

"They were shouting slogans in his support and also in support of opposition leader Mirhossein Mousavi," Amo said.

Agence-presse reports on close to conservative publication Mohsen Sirouie, said, "The burial ceremony has come to an end and the crowd are in the streets around the shrine demonstrating and shouting anti-government slogans."

The reformist Rahesa website said crowds carrying "green symbols" had chanted, "Today is the day of mourning and the green Imam mourns in the martyr of this movement," referring to the color adopted by the opposition.

The reports could not be verified independently. Foreign media have been banned from reporting on protests and also from traveling to Qom for Montazeri's funeral.

Hint police were out in force in Qom, 125 km south of Tehran for the funeral of the senior cleric, who died in hospital after the death of the establishment during his life.

His death from a heart attack occurred at a time when the government was seeking to choke off any attempt by its opponents to use the run-up to the Shiite religious ceremony of Ashura to stage large-scale rallies.

Now the seventh-day mourning ritual for Montazeri will coincide with Ashura on Sunday, perhaps amplifying the intensity of any protests. The Islamic custom of the ceremony makes it harder for the authorities to keep people off the streets.

The internal upheaval, highlighted by Montazeri's arguments the leadership had lost its legitimacy, has complicated a long-running dispute over Iran's nuclear program, which the West believes may have military, not just civilian, purposes.

Mousavi, the main opposition leader, attended Quran and had given his condolences to the family. His condolences, the reformist website Rahesa said. But security forces were reported to have intercepted other activists on their way to the city.

Opposition figures declared a national day of mourning for Montazeri, who was ousted in the 1980s to succeed revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, but was shunned under after he criticized mass executions of prisoners.

Khamenei, who succeeded Khomeini after he died in 1989, expressed his condolences, but did not attend Grand ceremony. Montazeri was a "difficult and critical role" that he faced toward the end of Khomeini's life," IRNA news agency said.

Khamenei made clear he believed Montazeri failed the test.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance told newspapers in Tehran not to print front-page photographs of Montazeri or carry condolence messages, except for Khamenei's, this Kalemat and Parliamentarian websites said. No official comment was available. Reuters

MOURNERS attend the funeral ceremony of Iranian Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the spiritual father of Iran's reform movement, his body in a casket at left, on Dec. 21.

Actress Brittany Murphy, 'Clueless' star, dies at 32

LOS ANGELES—ACTRESS BRITtany Murphy, known for her roles in films such as "Clueless" and "8 Mile," died Sunday after suffering a cardiac arrest at her home, police and hospital officials said. She was 32.

Murphy's mother discovered the star slumped unconscious in a shower at her home in Los Angeles before her husband, British screenwriter Simon Monjack, called emergency services, entertainment website TMZ.com reported.

The actress was rushed to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Beverly Hills where she was pronounced dead at 10:04 a.m., spokeswoman Sofia Gennett said.

Los Angeles Police Department officers went at Murphy's home asking preliminary questions, police confirmed. Investigators later said foul play was not suspected in the death.

Murphy's family immediate spokesperson.

News of Murphy's death comes after a medical drama involving her husband Monjack last month, when an ambulance was called to a Los Angeles airport several guns in the weight returned from Puerto Rico.

On that occasion, it was the actress's husband who was rushed to hospital. Reports said the couple had been returning to Los Angeles after Murphy was thrown off the set of a movie and fired for difficult behavior.

Murphy made her name in television sitcoms during the 1990s before spotting notable roles in "Clueless," "Girl, Interrupted," "Sin City," "8 Mile" and "Happy Feet." She provided the voice of Lorenzo Pimiro in more than 200 episodes of the animated television sitcom "King Of The Hill." Born in Atlanta, Murphy was raised by her mother, Sharon, in New Jersey before moving to Los Angeles.

The star scored her first role in 1993, on the television show "Matters," before landing a starring role the same year in "Freedd's Close." She also had recurring roles in "Sister, Sister," "Party of Five" and "Boy Meets World." In addition to acting, Murphy also released a successful hump-to-comic collaborating with British DJ Paul Oakenfold on the single "Faster Kill Pussycat," a club hit that reached number one on the dance charts.

In the dancing penguin animated hit film "Happy Feet," she performed a cover version of Queen's "Somebody to Love" and Sarah, Wild & Free's "Boogie Wonderland."

Before marrying Monjack in 2007, she was engaged to actor-singer Jeff Kimmitone and previously dated actor Ashton Kutcher.

AFP

MURPHY

Obama health care plan clears key Senate hurdle

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT BARACK Obama's top domestic goal, overhauling US health care, cleared a key hurdle Saturday with no room to spare and severed all but vote to pass by his self-imposed Christmas deadline.

After hours of debate, all 58 Democrats and their two independent allies stood ready to a vote after 1:00 a.m. to get exactly the 60 votes needed to end debate on a landmark compromise bill.

"What's really killing more and more Americans every day is complications from our health care system," Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said in the final speech before the ballot.

All 40 Republicans stood against the measure, acknowledging that for the moment they lacked the power to kill the sweeping proposal, but vowing Democrats would pay a price in the November 2010 congressional elections.

"It's not too late. All it takes is one. Just one. All it takes is one. One sacrifice is all it takes to save our way of life," Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said in a vain last-ditch appeal for a Democratic defector.

Senators were scheduled to hold vote more procedural votes today spare and then a final ballot on Tuesday—Christmas Eve—on passing what would be the most sweeping overhaul of the kind in four decades.

Passage would set up tough negotiations for the Senate and the House of Representatives—which approved its version of the bill on Nov. 7—to craft a compromise version they could send to Obama to sign into law.

Democratic leaders hope to do so before the Christmas recess to leave January or early February.

Even many Democratic foods were expected were tough new restrictions on federal insurers going to subsidies abortions and the Senate's decision to strip out a government-backed "public option" to compete with private insurers.

The highly-unusual overnight vote came after a day of tense behind-the-scenes in the Capitol in Washington dug out from under the worst winter storm to pound, relatively a thick layer of snow and iced over some roads.

"What the American people ought to pass is that everybody can't make the rules tonight. That's what they ought to pass," said Republican Senator Tom Coburn, a medical doctor.

That drew a sharp rebuke from Senator Dick Durbin, the number two Democrat, who said he did not "think it's appropriate in the breaking prayer to wish misfortune on a colleague. AFP

Police recover stolen Auschwitz death camp sign

WARSAW—POLISH POLICE SAID FRIDAY Monday they have recovered the Nazi German "Arbeit macht frei" sign stolen from the site of the Auschwitz death camp in southern Poland and arrested the alleged thieves.

The men arrested four years-aged from 20 to 29 in the north of Poland. The recovered sign has been cut up into three pieces," Dariusz Nowak, spokesman for the police in southern Krakow, said.

"They were picked up shortly before midnight and the sign was found in a house," he added without giving further details.

The infamous sign—the first surviving which hung over the entrance to the Auschwitz death camp, now a museum, was stolen in dawn on Friday, sparking a storm of outrage from world leaders, Jewish groups and Holocaust survivors.

The sign, which means "Work Will Set You Free," came to symbolize the horror of the camp. Some occupied Poland when 1.1 million mainly Jewish prisoners died during World War II, from starvation and executions but mostly in the gas chambers.

The camp was visited by more than a million people last year. AFP

Editor Raul G. Manuela ■ Assistant Editor Connie S. Martinez

BUSINESS

11-month budget gap swells to ₱272.5B

Gov't blames poor tax collection, typhoon damage

By Reena F.W. Domingo

THE BUDGET DEFICIT SWELLED TO P272.5 BILLION in the 11 months to November due to continually weak revenues, slower economic growth and the impact of recent devastating typhoons.

The amount was more than four times the ₱66.7 billion recorded during the same period last year.

Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves said in a briefing that given each fiscal performance, the full-year deficit for 2009 was moving closer to ₱300 billion.

"We will endeavor to keep the deficit below this level, which most international institutions find acceptable to ensure sustained economic growth amid the global financial crisis and the required increased spending due to the damage caused by the typhoons," Teves said.

Government earnings from January to November totaled ₱1.02 trillion, or 5.5 percent lower than earnings in the same period last year.

Of the total, the Bureau of Internal Revenue accounted for ₱713.1 billion, also down by 3.3 percent from a year ago.

The Bureau of Customs contributed ₱203.4 billion, a decrease of 16.6 percent from last year.

The Bureau of the Treasury reported revenues of ₱66.3 billion, or 8.6 percent higher year on year.

In the first 11 months, the government spent ₱1.29 trillion, increasing by 12.7 percent from the same period in 2008.

In November alone, the government incurred a budget deficit of ₱6.6 billion, which was higher by about 50 percent from the ₱4.2 billion spent over the budget in the same month last year.

Last month, the government raised ₱86.3 billion in revenues, decreasing by 11.7 percent year on year.

Of the total, the BIR chipped in ₱70 billion, which was 8.8 percent lower than the year-ago collections.

Customs contributed ₱17.5 billion, a decrease of 24.9 percent.

The Treasury turned in ₱4.2 bi...

IN THIS ISSUE

■ BOP surplus seen hitting $4B-$5B/B6

■ Japan firms bet on Asia /B3

Closing bells and the picture for 2010

THE TRADING YEAR IS FROM TRADITIONALLY over when it closes tomorrow for the holidays. And the last two to three trading days devoted for the year—Dec. 28 and 29—would almost seem to pass to be nothing other than to market painting except that it may serve to establish mark to market closing prices.

For all practical purposes, the market is already over for the year by tomorrow.

As it may always before, prices may speak there may up to a rally but such would be without the dynamics and mass of demand and supply that would make a market. This is because most of the big guns are already out on vacation for the holidays.

But take note. The prices at the closing bells are not necessarily without any meaning or significance at all. They do. They may not be only the beginning prices for next year but may become the indicative floor price of some select stocks that may turn hot in next year's trading game.

What this means is that, aside those closing bell prices could be the best there is already for some stocks, it could just be the tipping point to a higher and sustained stock price plays for some stocks when the market re-opens next year.

This will happen to stocks that have some unfolding good story lines like a turnaround, new growth prospects, asset play and the like. We have several of them in the offing.

If you're been reading the news, you may have come across them as being quietly and slowly bought already by some local and foreign institutions in the last two to three weeks.

Let's get the facts when we come back after the holidays.

Forecast for 2010

In the meantime, this is what I see as next year's picture. Cyclical recovery the world over will happen.

MARKET RIDER

Dex Sorreva

In the US, I believe this has already started. If you will notice, better earnings reports have been announced, turning favorable. When you look further back, you will see that this is the pattern that has emerged since the start of the second semester.

And while unemployment numbers may still have remained big ones down, the reason behind this is not because more companies are still falling but that the ordinary American worker has learned to become more productive. Therefore, current rates of production requirement are rather sufficiently met by even fewer number of work forces.

In the past, such would have already worked more labor intensities. But to recall, this was also the same factor cited that led to the poor profit performance and results of the still recurring large percentage of unemployment statistics.

Thus, creative industries are so far summoned to reverse the current unemployment problem. One simple strategy advanced is to encourage more business activity in the grassroots level, a theory that has tried to reboot open economies. In other words, they want to see supporting more small scale enterprises for employment.

Providing mass employment, however, is better achieved in the intermediate term by large scale businesses and government development activities. Thus, to make this happen, two essential things are provided. First is for interest rates to remain low. Second is to get more credit to private businesses that needed to expand and to government development projects that produce more employment.

This strategy is anticipated to enhance the growth prospects of the US and the global economy, including the Philippines, in 2010.

Specifically, the rational elections in May some may cause huge spending that may lead to additional consumption that, in turn, could stir more production and employment. Nonetheless, the drivers for the country's main GDP growth will still come from the strong performance of the agricultural and services sectors and the latter does expected to remain more of OFWs.

The factors that could possibly threaten the country's prospects could be any or the combination of the following reported events, namely: the anticipated occurrences of the El Niño weather phenomenon in March, the rise of oil prices and the possible surge in global rice prices that might be triggered by a drought in India as the Philippines remains to be the world's largest rice importing country.

Therefore, without additional unexpected surprises, GDP in 2010 could still acceptably be at 3.6 to 3.6 percent.

But bears love spin

Don't worry about missing any market developments at this time. It's no big deal. What the market is doing right now, as I have said earlier, is hardly worth worrying about.

Stock plays will not start until after the holidays. The major stock plays will only happen on next year. So, enjoy the yuletide break and have a "Merry Christmas!"

(You may reach the Market Rider at *market.rider@inquirer.com.ph* or *dexsorreva@yahoo.com.*)

11-month budget gap swells to ₱272.5B

From page B1

lion, which was 2 percent lower than year-ago revenues while other offices contributed P4.6 billion, also down 2.3 percent from last year.

Expenditures in November reached P102.7 billion or 8.4 percent higher year on year.

Interior officials continued to blame "revenue eroding" measures passed by Congress as well as the sharp decline in imports for the collecting agencies' dismal performance.

The government intends to adjust the fiscal program for 2010 "to reflect the impact of the lower economic growth on revenue collection efforts and to increase spending to continue supporting sustained recovery," Teves said.

According to the National Statistics Coordination Board, the country's total domestic output grew 8.8 percent in the third quarter, slowing from 4.6 percent in the same period last year.

Teves added that the government also intended to consolidate its fiscal position in the medium-term, looking at a balanced budget by 2013.

Stocks ...

From page B1

million shares worth ₱2.78 billion.

The local currency traded at 46.650 to the dollar.

There were 42 gainers against 68 losers and 50 that were unchanged.

"With only three days of trading this week, investors opted to stay on the sidelines, as the lack of market moving developments led to weak volumes during the session," the Bank of the Philippine Islands said in an advisory to clients.

Manila Water Co. gained 1.66 percent to ₱13.50 while Century Peak Metal Holdings dropped 3.09 percent to ₱6.78.

SM Investments Corp. rose 0.8 percent to ₱535 while Energy Development Corp. snapped at ₱4.51. AFP

PSALM
POWER SECTOR ASSETS & LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES OF INDEPENDENT APPRAISER FOR ASSET REVALUATION PROJECT OF PSALM CORPORATION

1. The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM), through the Approved Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2010 intends to apply the sum of Six Million Eight Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱P6,800,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Services of Independent Appraiser for Asset Revaluation Project of PSALM. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.
2. PSALM now calls for the submission of eligibility documents for Procurement of Services of an Independent Appraiser for Asset Revaluation Project of PSALM.
   a. The revaluation project will cover the remaining assets transferred by National Power Corporation (NPC) to PSALM pursuant to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).
   b. The undertaking will determine the fair market values of these fixed assets necessary to comply with the Philippine Financial Reporting Standards (PFRS).
   c. The revaluation of these assets is also intended for rate adjustment application with the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), insurance coverage, taxation and other reporting requirements.

   The bidding documents will be available starting 20 December 2010 at 8/F Bankmor Building, 8737 Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Interested consultants must submit their eligibility documents on or before 10:00 AM of 29 December 2010 at 8/F Bankmor Building, 8737 Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Late submission shall not be allowed. Eligibility documents opening shall be on 29 December 2010 at 10:15 AM, at 8/F Bankmor Building, 8737 Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated based on a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion.
3. The BAC shall draw up the short list of consultants from those who have submitted eligibility documents and have been determined eligible in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act (R.A.) 9184 (RA 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The short list shall consist of five (5) prequalified bidders who will be entitled to submit bids. The criteria and rating system for short listing, which are also provided in the Instructions to Bidders, are the following:
   a. Qualifications of Bidder
      i. SEC Accreditation
      ii. Experience in Similar Projects
      iii. Management Experience and Staff Capacity
   b. Approach and Methodology
      i. Quality of Methodology and Presentation of the Proposal
      ii. Work Program and Planning Schedule
   c. Personnel General Qualifications and Competence
      i. Project Manager/Team Leader
      ii. Other Key Staff
4. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the IRR of RA 9184. Bidding is open to all interested bidders, whether local or foreign, subject to the conditions for eligibility in the IRR of RA 9184. Deadline for the submission of bids shall be on 10 January 2011 at 10:15 AM.
5. The Procuring Entity shall evaluate bids using the Least Cost Selection procedure.
6. The contract shall be completed within three (3) months.
7. PSALM reserves the right to reject any and all bids, annul the bidding process, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.
8. For further information, please refer to:

   FERDINAND G.A. FLORENDO
   Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation
   8/F Bankmor Building, 8755 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
   Telephone No. (632)8908626 Fax No. (632)8908600
   Email: fgflorendo@psalm.gov.ph
   PSALM website: www.psalm.gov.ph

   Bids Issued

(Sgd.) FERDINAND G. A. FLORENDO
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

As of December 21, 2010

CURRENCIES

December 21, 2010	Unit	Cash Equivalent	Bank Buy Rate	Bank Sell Rate
Australia	dollar	1.00	46.8000	46.9600
Brunei	dollar	1.00	34.7000	34.8400
Canada	dollar	1.00	46.6000	46.7600
China	yuan	1.00	6.9800	7.0000
Hong Kong	dollar	1.00	5.9800	6.0000
Indonesia	100 rupiah	100.00	5.1600	5.1800
Japan	yen	100.00	57.2000	57.4000
Malaysia	ringgit	1.00	15.2000	15.3000
Singapore	dollar	1.00	36.1000	36.2500
South Korea	100 won	100.00	4.1000	4.1200
Taiwan	dollar	1.00	1.5600	1.5700
Thailand	baht	1.00	1.5400	1.5500
United Kingdom	pound	1.00	72.2000	72.5000
United States	dollar	1.00	46.6500	46.7500
Vietnam	100 dong	100.00	0.2300	0.2400
Euro	euro	1.00	61.8000	62.0000
India	100 rupee	100.00	103.5000	104.0000
Kuwait	dinar	1.00	165.0000	166.0000
Saudi Arabia	riyal	1.00	12.4200	12.4600
United Arab Emirates	dirham	1.00	12.6900	12.7300
Bahrain	dinar	1.00	123.5000	124.0000
Qatar	riyal	1.00	12.8000	12.8400
Oman	rial	1.00	120.8000	121.2000
Switzerland	franc	1.00	50.2000	50.4000
Bahrain	dinar	1.00	123.5000	124.0000
Qatar	riyal	1.00	12.8000	12.8400
Oman	rial	1.00	120.8000	121.2000
Switzerland	franc	1.00	50.2000	50.4000

Gov't plans to sell 60% of PNOC-EC by early 2010

DOF increases stake for sale from 40%

By Rencel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS NOW EYEING THE strategic sale of a 60-percent stake in PNOC Exploration Corp. in an effort to secure a better price, according to Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves.

"We will go for a strategic sale of 60 percent instead of the [previously planned sale of] 40 percent with the hope that we can get a better response from the market," Teves said in a briefing yesterday.

The finance chief said the target was to get this done by the end of the first quarter next year, with initial estimates placing potential revenue at P14 billion to P15 billion.

"It is too early to say. Pahul-the-other is because these things are dynamic, but the rough estimate is in that neighborhood," he said.

Teves added that the government's financial advisers had initially advised for an initial public offering of 40 percent, considering the adverse market conditions.

"We want a strategic sale to a particular interested buyer, but I'm also between these two options I [throw]," he said, adding that the new plan still needed fleshing up.

Teves said that, other things being equal, the government expected to get better prices on strategic sale than a 40 percent sale, from which the expected revenue is about P13 billion.

"We are projecting [an expenditure in 2010 will be higher than this year," he said. "We need more revenues to minimize the deficit."

Teves said the government's economic managers intend to adjust the fiscal program for 2010, which currently sets a deficit limit of P150 billion.

He said this may be changed to reflect the impact of the lower economic growth on revenue collections efforts and in increase spending to continue supporting sustained economic recovery.

The finance chief said the aim was to keep next year's budget deficit lower than the expected P300 billion to be incurred in 2009.

Kevin Chua, he said the government also intended to consolidate its fiscal position in the medium term, eyeing a balanced budget by 2013.

But he added that fiscal programming beyond 2010 will be up to the new administration that will be sworn in on June 30 next year.

BellTel shareholders sell stakes

By Dustin L. Luzo

TWO MINORITY SHAREHOLDERS IN BELL Telecommunication Philippines Inc. have sold their stakes in the firm to a holding company that also owns a small stake in Liberty Telecoms Holdings Inc.

In separate disclosures to the Philippine Stock Exchange, South China Resources Inc. and Liberty Flour Mills Inc. divested their holdings in BellTel for a combined consideration of P1.45 billion.

The buyer of both blocks was identified as Richlung Holdings Limited's (CC) Guangmeiyuan Inc., which holds a 6.34 percent stake in Liberty. It similarly named Chu Gamendra (CC) Corporation—a foreign-owned entity—as an additional 3.77 percent to Liberty.

Yesterday, publicly-listed South China Resources said it sold the company's investment of 3.24 million BellTel shares for P1.107 billion, having secured the approval of its board of directors for the disposal last Nov. 11, 2009.

Similarly, publicly-listed Liberty Flour Mills sold its stake in BellTel, consisting of 800,000 shares, for P327.2 million.

Bell Telecommunication Philippines, Inc. (BellTel) is a full-service telecommunications company that began its commercial operations in January 2002.

It is authorized to provide the full range of services throughout the Philippines, giving it access to all the central business districts where 75 percent of the country's commerce is transacted, as well as its special economic zones.

To do this, BellTel uses fixed wireless, fiber optics and satellite technology to provide its broadband services.

South China Resources was previously engaged in oil and gas exploration, development and production, but has diversified into banking and telecommunications since the mid-1990s.

Meanwhile, Liberty Flour Mills is engaged in the business of manufacturing of various kinds of bakery flour and flour-related products.

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Japan firms bet on Asia

By Abigail L. Ho

DESPITE THE FACT that Japan continues to suffer due to the recent Japanese firms operating in Asia Pacific still plan to expand their businesses in the next year or two.

According to a survey conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization, 51.3 percent of the respondents said they would still expand business operations in 2010 or 2011. 5.9 percent say plans leave that from a previous survey.

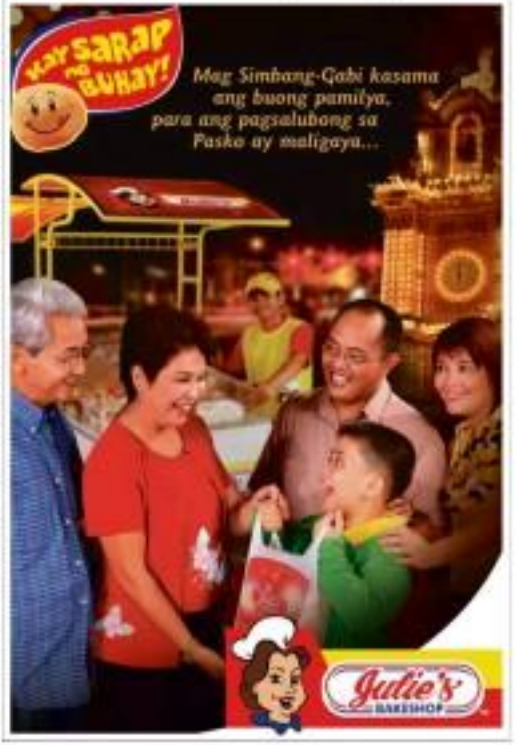
Emerging economies Bangladesh, China, India and the Republic of Korea were the most well placed to take advantage of this trend, the survey revealed, with more than 60 percent of those polled saying they would definitely make more investments in these areas in the next two years.

Their business expansion decision was based on the fact that these economies have registered rapid recovery in domestic demand and exports.

World's Most Beloved Gadget Has Its New Generation for the New Year: MSI Wind U135, a Must-Have for 2010

CONTRERAS OF APEX MOVES ON

APEX MINING CO., INC. wishes to report that its current President & CEO, Atty. Dee G. Contreras, Jr. will relinquish his positions effective December 31, 2009. Atty. Contreras intends to engage in independent consultancy on Legal, HR and special services in responsible mining and related activities in natural resources. Atty. Contreras has successfully served Apex since 2007 and a highlight was to bring the company into commercial production in January this year. The Apex Board wishes to convey their gratitude to Atty. Contreras for his hard work and diligence in the past few years serving as President and CEO. Furthermore, the Board is pleased to announce that Atty. Contreras will continue to assist and support the company as a member of the board and serve as consultant on legal and related matters. Apex is currently considering the appointment of a suitable replacement and will shortly make an announcement to the market.



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BUSINESS

RP gets aid to deal with climate change

THE PHILIPPINES WILL BE ONE OF three Asian countries to receive financial assistance under the "Clean Technology Fund," enabling the country to better withstand the impact of climate change.

The Philippines, along with Thailand and Vietnam, will each get $250 million (around P11.5 billion) from CTF.

CTF is a fund put up by various donor countries to help developing nations like the Philippines cope with climate change. The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank were tapped to facilitate the grant of assistance from the fund.

On the sidelines of the convention on climate change held in Copenhagen last week, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and ADB vice president Ursula Schaefer-Preuss discussed the financial assistance to the Philippines and how the power would be used to fund renewable energy development projects, ADB said in a statement.

"The investment will build upon ADB's support in the Philippines Energy Efficiency Program and should benefit tens of millions of Filipinos by simultaneously bringing down energy costs and contributing to lower greenhouse gas emissions," Schaefer-Preuss said.

Also, ADB and World Bank may provide additional funding to complement the $250-million CTF aid. The two foreign lenders earlier vowed to invest in projects that would help the country cope with severe natural disturbances.

Climate change is largely to blame for the calamities that recently struck the Philippines, killing over a thousand people.

According to the World Bank, some P100 billion would be needed to rehabilitate the country in the aftermath of the storms.

Michelle V. Ramos

BOP surplus seen hitting $4B-$5B

Deficit in Nov. due to debt payments

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS said the country was likely to post a balance of payments surplus of $4 billion to $5 billion at the end of the year despite a deficit in November.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said foreign-exchange inflows in the form of portfolio and direct investments were overriding, as investor confidence returned with the easing of the global economic turmoil.

In November, the BOP slipped into a deficit of $93 million, reversing the $896-million surplus registered in October. Guinigundo said the BOP deficit last month was due to the payment made by the country's banks and other sectors to their foreign counterparts, which turned out bigger than the inflow of investments during the period.

He said investments inflows were still high, especially "hot money" being invested in the local equities and bond markets.

He said the full-year $5-month BOP will showed a record surplus of $4.06 billion despite the deficit in November, Guinigundo said.

Foreign exchange inflows in December are likely to exceed the outflows, thereby boosting further the country's external position, he said.

Guinigundo said the debt payments in November were already accounted for in the projections for the whole year.

BOP which determines a country's ability to engage in commercial transactions with the rest of the world such as importation of goods and services, is the difference between the inflows and outflows of foreign currencies.

Inflows come in the form of foreign direct and portfolio investments, foreign currency-denominated borrowings, remittances from Filipinos based overseas, income from exports and investments offshore, and grants. Outflows represent the amount paid for imports and debts.

A surplus in the BOP helps boost the country's gross international reserves (GIR), or the total amount of foreign currencies managed by the central bank.

The GIR is targeted to hit $43 billion to $45 billion this year. As of October, the GIR hit a new high of $43.2 billion, up from $42.3 billion in September and $33.89 billion in October last year.

Guinigundo said that the latest level of foreign-exchange reserves is enough to cover eight months worth of imports, which is better than the internationally threshold of four months worth of imports. There were also four times the amount of the country's debts falling due in the short term.

BIR reverses position on Shell's ₱7-B tax issue

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue has reversed its position on whether an oil refiner should pay P7.3 billion in excise taxes on fuel imports, according to the new BIR ruling.

According to Commissioner Jose L. Yan-Tuvera, the BIR concludes that Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. should pay the tax based on its new importation papers.

Under these previous commissioners, the BIR maintained that Shell did not have to pay the amount that the Bureau of Customs wanted the oil firm to pay.

"The rulings of the previous commissioners are valid, based on the representations made by Shell then," Yan-Tuvera said.

But based on factual findings of (Customs) which were previously not represented or given by Shell, there is basis for reversing the previous BIR position," he added.

In a 57-page petition filed with the Court of Tax Appeals on Dec. 1, Shell said the products that the BOC and should be taxed—the catalytic cracked gasoline (CCG) and light catalytic cracked gasoline (LCCG)—should not even be subjected to excise taxes in the first place.

The oil firm claimed that both the CCG and LCCG, being intermediate products or raw materials, will had to go through the refinement process before being sold at the pump as refined petroleum gasoline.

Because of that, Shell said its shipments—which were not finished products like gasoline—should not be charged excise taxes.

Gov't expands Semirara Mining's coal contract

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAS expanded the coal operating contract of Semirara Mining Corp. to include more 7,200 hectares of prospective coal-rich areas on the Silay and Cabuyo Islands.

At a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Semirara said the amendment to COC No. 3 was the "result of the (company's) geophysical and geological reconnaissance evaluation of the presence of coal occurrences in Silay and Cabuyo Islands."

The amendment also brought the total land area under Semirara's COC No. 5 to 12,700 hectares.

In June, the energy department granted Semirara a coal reconnaissance permit covering 24 coal blocks on Silay and Cabuyo Islands in Antique, after two months, Semirara requested the DOE to amend its COC to include the additional coal areas.

The DOE executed the contract to cover 5,100 hectares (14 coal blocks) on Semirara Island; 3,000 hectares (nine coal blocks) on Cabuyo Island; and 4,300 hectares (12 coal blocks) in Silay Island.

"By virtue of the amendment, the operator will provide P480,000 in assistance in-kind to the DOE to be paid in two equal tranches," document showed.

Last year, the DOE had extended the company's contract by another 15 years, giving it the exclusive right to explore, develop and mine for coal on Semirara Island until 2027.

The government, through the semi-debtaur Energy Development Board, awarded a 25-year contract to another company in July 1977. This area later assigned to Semirara.

Recently, Semirara Mining, through its wholly-owned subsidiary, paid Power Source Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. $1.56-0 million, representing the down payment for the 600-megawatt Cebu coal power plant.

Ayala Land's long-term focus ensures stability in 2009

Challenging periods bring about many positive changes for those who manage for the long haul

With the global economic crisis marking the Philippines' start of 2009 with a bleak outlook for many industries including real estate, Ayala Land put financial measures in place to ensure the company's stability.

Backed by a history of successfully weathering economic turmoil such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Ayala Land set forth at the start of the year with strategic moves intending to keep cash flow healthy and the balance sheets stable. Its strength—a very cost effectiveness, exploring new markets and maintaining transparency and heightened awareness among customers and stakeholders with property developments.

Antonino T. Aquino, Ayala Land President, gives an overview of this year, "Certain adjustments happened in the marketplace due to the global economic crisis that started in the third quarter of last year. But fortunately, we were able to see that the country was not as badly affected and that demand had proven to be very resilient."

Early Conservative Posture

"Given the projections on the crisis, Ayala Land took on a conservative posture. We made sure that the company had sufficient liquidity so that if the crisis deepens, we would still be left standing. We geared up to survive and to prepared for the worst possible scenario," recounts Aquino.

To achieve this, Ayala Land launched a limited supply of the originally planned number of units compared to the last two years. "We were cautious and cautious of the rate of market absorption," he relates.

But things ended up being not as bad as we anticipated. The second and third quarter showed evidence that there was a mild recovery. Sales also realized that the dip in sales at the early part of the year was mainly due to issues related to market conference rather than to the fundamentals of the economy," he adds.

Aquino notes that to date, interest rates are benign and banks are still looking to improve their mortgage portfolio. Consumer lending remains to be the only segment that is not affected by the crisis. "We are looking at other investment opportunities, primarily property. We realized too, that insurance wealth in the Philippines has not been significantly affected by the crisis. That's the biggest difference with other major economies."

The Ayala Land head pointed to remittances from the 8 to 10 million overseas Filipinos as the single biggest reason for the resilient economy. Studies indicate that one of two Filipino households receive contributions, a significant portion of which is spent on food, and other daily necessities. Some 20 to 25 percent is estimated to be spent on housing needs.

Shifting Issues

By the third quarter, with the Philippine economy clearly panning out differently as expected, Ayala Land changed strategies and instead grabbed the opportunities presented by the slower market and pushed with aggressive sales and promotional programs.

Slackening efforts for residential projects were detailed as Ayala Land instead more resources

Antonino T. Aquino, Ayala Land President

We geared up to survive and be prepared for the worst possible scenario

"We have communicated more to the market and to our shareholders as we lived up to transparency in our plans. Planning for different scenarios has kept us stable."

He concludes it is important to note that what drives Ayala Land's behavior as a company is its long-term perspective. "Our investors as well as our customers appreciate Ayala Land's traditional focus on ensuring the company's long-term stability," Aquino declares.

Ayala Land, enhancing land, enriching lives for more people.

For more information about Ayala Land, you may log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph

Watch out for Tony Aquino's unveiling of Ayala Land's exciting plans for 2010 in the Sunday issues.

LIFESTYLE Wellness

I've discovered the wonders of tea tree oil

By Liz S. Bernardo

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A FASCINATION FOR aromatherapy and I have tried, tested and used many essential oils, experimenting on their effects on moods and minor discomforts. My favorite, second only to lavender, is tea tree oil and recently I have been using it more and more often. I'd like to share some of its wonderful qualities.

Melaleuca Alternifolia or tea tree mainly grows in Australia. New Zealand tea tree is the famous Manuka. Tea tree oil is the essential oil distilled from the leaves of the tea tree. When using essential oils, it is very important to remember that fragrance oils are just that—for fragrance purposes. If you simply want to scent your environment, get fragrance oils which are substantially cheaper than pure essential oils.

However, if you are after the aromatherapy benefits of oil, get pure essential oil. The label and the price will indicate basically if you are getting.

Pure aromatherapy grade essential oils are more expensive, but a small bottle goes a long way since you will be using only drops at a time. Tea tree oil has a mild woody smell as well as the smell of freshly cut grass and a hint of eucalyptus.

Tea tree oil has both anti-fungal and antibacterial qualities. It is also well-endowed on the skin.

Here are many ways to use tea tree oil.

Disinfect a room

In a diffuser, the scent of tea tree oil will purify the air of an enclosed area. Or use a water spray bottle, fill it with a cup of water and put about 15-20 drops of tea tree oil and spray it directly into the air.

Respiratory problems

It can also be used when you have a cold, flu or any respiratory illness. Those who suffer from asthma can put a couple of drops of tea tree oil into a diffuser with water to help clear the lungs. For direct inhalation, get a large bowl of boiling water and add 4-6 drops of tea tree oil and cover your head with a towel and inhale the vapors.

Acne

I simply take a drop of tea tree oil and apply directly to the pimple. For acne conditions, I take a small clean cologne spray bottle and fill it with distilled water and put 5-to 6 drops of tea oil. Spray this on the face after cleansing and allow to air-dry. The tea tree oil will act as natural astringent and will dry up the pimples. (to ward bacterial qualities will prevent further eruptions. Again, results will vary and the effects will not be immediate.

Pet care

Add a couple of drops of tea tree oil to your pet's food dish or take a spray bottle with water and add a couple of drops of tea tree oil. These will disappear. Spray clean to the dog's skin and brush against the growth of the hair. This works on dogs but for some reason, all the vets (four I have visited have cautioned the use of tea tree oil on cats, but none offer an explanation.

Kitchen cleaner

Use a spray bottle with several drops of tea tree oil and spray on kitchen counters after cleaning. Do not rinse off. This will disinfect the area and leave it smelling clean and fresh, it will also deter mice and hopefully cockroaches too.

Insect bites

Just a drop of diluted tea tree oil right on the mosquito bite will help the swelling and itching. For babies, I suggest you dilute the oil in a bit of water and do not apply the oil directly on baby's skin. For grownups, make your own natural bug repellent spray by using the same oil and water formula. Spray it on the exposed areas of skin and sleep well.

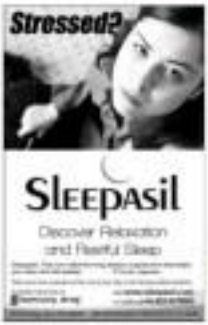
Dandruff

Using shampoos that contain at least 5 percent of pure tea tree oil should prevent dandruff because of its anti-fungal qualities. Or simply adding a drop of tea tree oil to the shampoo before using should do the trick.

Sleep better

Spray the oil and water solution lightly on the face and/or pillows and blankets to give you a restful sleep. To make your own linen spray, fill the bottle with 1 cup distilled water or ½ c distilled water and ½ c high proof alcohol (vodka or lavender) but do not use rubbing alcohol. Place 20-30 drops of tea tree essential oil. Tea tree can be combined with lavender, peppermint or eucalyptus. Get pure essential oil aromatherapy grade oils.

Are you buying for fragrance or for aromatherapy benefits?



ESSENTIAL oils

MASSAGE Cabana

Mactan resort pampers guests with new spa treatments

CELTIS Spa Village

RITUALITY Pool and Tea Pavilion

PRIVATE villas

CELTIS Spa Village at SHANGRI-LA's Mactan Resort and Spa, introduces treatments inspired by Asian healing philosophies and local wellness traditions.

The Tropical Linen and Lime Wrap refreshes the body with a blend of natural fresh mangoes, pineapples and hand-picked aloe vera. A mix of honey and sea-green marine clay removes dull skin while the banana leaf wrap cools the body.

Highly recommended for sports adventure travelers after an intense physical activity, the Hot Lava or Miracle relief uses a balm made of indigenous flora including Sambong (Philippine Camphor), Native Lemon Grass, Lagundi (Five-leaf Chaste tree) and Mentz Cinch-Bruji Tree (herb) to soothe body aches and pains. A deep pressure massage and large heated banana leaves enhance the healing properties of the balm and provide long-lasting relief.

Pulitan Hilot and Sampay provide a heightened sense of pampering with four healing hands. The Pulitan Hilot is developed from the ancient Filipino Hilot massage that focuses on specific body parts to relieve pain and tension. The Sampay treatment involves two therapists working on opposite ends of the body performing a Hot harmonizing facial and foot reflexology at the same time.

The Himalayan Mystic Ritual is a four-hour opulent journey that begins with Himalayan Rain, an invigorating Tellus Sea Salt Scrub, and an organic red mountain body mask capped with Himalayan healing Stone Massage.

The Power of the Lotus Ritual, a four-hour skin restorer, includes a milk bath, scrub, firming body wrap, caviar facial and silk foot or hand care. A generous lathering of the finest products made from the lotus flower ensures a supple skin care wrap ideal for the whole body.

For only Php,500++, guests can enjoy complimentary services and activities. The package includes overnight stay at a superior garden view room with daily breakfast buffet at Tides or Arigato.

Aside from these, guests are also entitled to a free shopping pass, access to the Health Club, use of the whirlpool, steam room, sauna and gym facilities, free broadband Internet service and free local city calls.

The Local Residents Package is valid until Dec. 24 for Philippine residents only. Proof of residency is required for experience-upon check in. For more information about the new treatments, call 231-0288 or visit www.shangri-la.com

FREE-FLOWING meditative sequences

Creating my sacred space

A CHALLENGING yoga pose

Aside from money troubles. . .

From page C6

By Cay Mina
Contributor

SINCE I STARTED MY PRACTICE of yoga 38 years ago, I have always set aside a special place and time for my ritual. When I first learned the asanas from a 2000 year old treatise, then to my mother, the concept of a "yoga mat" did not even exist. I was learning hatha yoga from a book, and practicing quietly for a few years.

In 1970, I migrated to America and soon started taking advanced yoga classes. I needed a room just for them, and would spread it open in a space beside my bed, with enough room for extended legs and arms, and for falling over from inverted poses.

Many years later, as my practice improved, I moved to my own home which was a 2000 year old brown stone in Boston, Massachusetts' South End. My ex-husband built me my very own yoga room.

I abandoned a platform with three expensive tatami mats I acquired from a flea sale, and then gave the room the look of a *dojo*. Along the walls before the windows was a 10 foot bar on period step, built to look like building's pipes. It made for a perfect ballet.

Although I was raised in the Catholic religion, my altar room featured a wide range of spiritual trappings from the Buddha and prayer wheels, to Native American dream catchers, beads and single feathers, and crystals of many colors and shapes. I had a crucifix of Jesus Christ, statues of St. Francis, Michael the Archangel, Madonna and Child, Buddha, Shiva and Ganesha. Many of these were gifts from friends and family.

My yoga room was a world-like chamber where I found solace, where I could escape from the tensions of daily life bringing up two small children, and running my own wholesale import business. For 16 years, at 5 a.m. sharp, I would put the curtains of the room to my sacred space, light a candle and incense and start my two-hour practice. As soon as I closed my eyes, the city's noises would fade in the distance. There was a mirror panel on one wall, I would spend hours staring at the dark silhouettes of my yoga poses, expanding and shifting shapes with every breath. I would roar at the rays of light encircling me. There was a moment when I went into such a relaxed state that I almost felt my body going through the fresh wall.

As my life took its many turns and turns, so did my yoga practice. It had evolved from years of rigid Iyengar Yoga training to the free-flowing meditative exploration I later learned from Angela Farmer and Victor Van Kooten.

My small-until-yoga room became an invaluable place of comfort and healing when I was faced with my life crisis...a painful unexpected divorce, ending 17 years of a close-knit family life.

New sacred space

When it was time to sell the building and move on to another city where my son wanted to attend the public high school, I detached myself from my beloved space and brought the spirit of my yoga room into a new location.

What a wonderful about-creating a separate and special place for yoga practice is the fact that one is encouraged to find the time to be alone.

Those days, I have flung to the winds most of the boundaries that have held my life together. Starting from my stressful business of 24 years, I decided to live in simple abundance on my lakeside summer home of many years. I still have my altar and its sacred objects in a yoga room.

Set by the wood stove upstairs is where I spread my yoga mat in the winter. This was the space where an angel (or my ancestor) visited me, the same year I retired. I had been meditating so deeply on a headstand, losing sense of time and space. Suddenly, I felt a strong presence at the corner of the landing in the living room.

Opening my eyes, I saw a swirling white mist, and a figure clad in light. Very clearly, I heard a woman's voice say gently: "I am so tired...I have come to deliver Sarah." Without hesitating, I heard myself ask, "Can I help?" "Yes," she answered, in that moment, every cell in my body could feel her "Being" sent my feet to the other side of the room. In the next few seconds, she was gone. By now I was wide-awake, feeling cuddled in a sweet cocoon of peace. Coming down from my headstand, I checked the time. It was three in the morning, for the next few days, I kept wondering what her message was until it came to me in a flash. That I would be more open and sensitive to helping others if I stayed centered and motivated in my own sacred space.

Home for 21 years

For 21 years now, I have known this place. It has spirits and angels, wild animals and all of God's beauty around me. Across the lake, I am surrounded by 500 acres of protected wilderness. On a sunny day, I take my yoga mat outdoors to my gardens, dreaming around the pear'd by the lake. Actually, it was just yesterday on my deck. I realize I am like my cat, Tyson. I see him lounging from one favorite hangout to another, whichever feels better at the moment.

My yoga practice has also spread its dimensions. Now I meditate my asanas in running on the lake, exercising in exercise and nature, even as the waters get chilled up for winters. In January, I spend four months in El Nido, my serene side yoga retreat, where my altar is the massive sea.

Back in New Hampshire in the spring, I may be found on top of the picnic table, reclaiming some challenging yoga poses of my younger years. Sometimes I find myself doing poses I could not even do before. I soak in my garden, but rub for hours, breathing space in my armpits and groins. I finish off with Pranayama, balanced on the porch ledge. The cavus resides in my belly. Warm and cold winds caress my spine. As I breathe in, I soften and open. As I breathe out, I empty out my daily dose of loneliness, uselessness or old pains, and receive the loving embrace of my bliss. I fall down, in the back, deeper and deeper, until the circle of energy expands to the spaces around me. Yes, my sacred space is inside me, and I take it along wherever I happen to be.

corresponding physical activity. For example, a brownie or fudge bar is equivalent to one hour of brisk walking."

There's no harm in saving Christmas goodies, but I suggest you share these with others.

Drink in moderation

Most people skip meals so they can drink more alcohol. But their calorie intake is significantly more than eating three normal meals plus two in-between snacks due to too much drinking and eating fatty junk foods.

Limit your drinking to one glass per occasion so you can break the habit of uncontrollable drinking that usually leads to hangovers. Once you get used to it, limit frequency of occasions from five to six to once or twice a week. You will see a big difference in your tummy.

Complete your sleep

After hearing my first few birthday bells, I realized that I've been cursing for more carbohydrates and high-fat foods during the day. And when I started to sleep, I didn't made a great effort to sleep earlier and to invest a big difference to my daily food consumption—it went back to normal.

Even if you sleep late because of parties, complete the sleeping hours you've been used to, preferably eight hours, to avoid overeating during the day.

Control spending

Christmas bonuses and extra earnings rarely make sure spend more on gifts, food and personal rewards and groceries. There's also a greater chance of overweight and any increase by 2.5 times the risk of becoming obese. Weight gain is usually caused by stress eating and resorting to abrupt high-calorie foods due to one's money situation.

E-mail the author at [redacted]@gmail.com

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The Cheesy Phenomenon

"Yihee! Sobrang Cheesy!"

Aside from money troubles, overspending can also lead to weight gain, study says

By Mitch Felipe-Mendoza
Contributor

IF YOU HAVE TO BINGE YOUR lifestyle by January, start today. You don't really have to lose weight or reach your goals (fitness level), but at least avoid weight gain. And Avrell's compilation is right about by the holidays.

The best way to be in charge of one's eating behavior is to engage in physical activity.

Move at least for two hours to burn calories. Walk in a mall is to and from the church for the Midnight Mass. Or start running for next year's marathon with friends while enjoying the cool weather.

Document eating and exercise

Writing down your daily food consumption and physical activities will help you regulate your eating and increase exercise time.

Yes, don't need to show everything you write to someone. What's important is you are one step ahead of doing something about your lifestyle—self-awareness. It is also a great sign that you are ready to work on your transition.

Forget dieting

You will always be exposed to books and diets that promise you quick results. Most of all the time until you finally give into it. Turn only the foods you like. Write a contract on your weekly holiday eating plan and ask your partners or close friends to be your witness.

"I will try my best to stick to my 1,000-calorie allowance for a week. But next week, Anything in excess will be matched up to a

AMOR G.

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime F. Licauco

Scientific studies on remote viewing

REMOTE VIEWING, OR MORE technically known as "traveling clairvoyance," is the mental ability to project one's consciousness or awareness to a specific distant place and see or even listen to and feel what is happening there.

Remote viewing as a psychic ability that nearly everyone can perform, even only after a brief training, in a relatively recent psychic discovery.

It was scientifically proven to exist after very extensive and exhaustive studies under controlled conditions for 20 years at the Stanford Research Institute (now called SRI International) on Menlo Park, California, by two top government scientists Dr. Hal Puthoff and Russell Targ.

Since Targ in Menlo Park after he had already left SRI. He was then working in other research scientist at Lockheed Corporation. During that meeting, I told him that I had modified the original protocol they had established for remote viewing at SRI. And he asked me what was my rate of success. I said about 90 percent. "Have hang for you train the subject?" I said about two hours.

"I have for laughed and told me: "For know, Jimmy, both you and I know a secret." And what was that, I asked him. "Well," explained Targ, "most people think that psychic functioning can be performed by only a few people, and that it takes long to train them to perform it. We both know that nearly everyone can do remote viewing and it takes only a short period to train people." I told him he was right and we both laughed.

I have been teaching the modified version of remote viewing in both my Inner Mind Development and Basic ESP and Intuition Development courses in the Philippines and in many parts of the world, with very good success for over 20 years now.

In the original remote viewing procedure developed at SRI, a subject stays at SRI and is matched closely by the viewer, who is in another room, next to a remote place of his choice, unknown to the remote viewer and the scientists. The other person is supposed to stay for about 30 minutes in his chosen location and write down what he sees, several hours in the meantime, both at SRI. The remote viewer is also asked to write down details of what the other person is seeing and doing. When the other person returns to SRI, they are separately asked to be interviewed and evaluated by an independent panel and not by the scientists, in order to prevent unconscious cues or biases that they may unconsciously project.

The percentage of accuracy obtained by the scientists, after numerous experiments over a period of 20 years, averaged 65 to 99 percent, a figure that could not be attributed to chance or to collusion between persons involved.

Today, remote viewing is part of the training of CIA agents, as well as some military personnel in the United States and possibly in other countries. Its applications in intelligence gathering and industrial espionage are numerous.

Simplified model

I have modified and simplified this semi-like ancient developed by Targ and Puthoff at SRI. In my version, all I do is ask each member of the class to choose a partner whom he does not know too well (a perfect stranger would be the best) and not. After placing the class in a meditative and passive state (an altered state of consciousness), I ask them to mentally go to each other's house and describe what each perceives, at the end of the session. Each will tell the other what he had seen in his partner's house.

In almost 20 years of teaching this method in the Philippines and abroad, about 99 percent of the participants are able to describe the house of the partner or some particular part of it with great accuracy. Sometimes, they even describe the house the partner has lived in before and not the present house. In a few instances, the remote viewers describes a house his partner intends to buy but does not yet own.

This modified version of remote viewing I had developed is now being used in two other Western countries, in Canada and Great Britain. In Canada, Dr. Lee Pulos, a professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia and a well-known hypnotherapist, is teaching this technique to his students. A British scientist named Dr. Steve Aisbett mentioned in this acting my model of remote viewing on his seminars in Great Britain.

I thought that remote viewing was a modern discovery. I was wrong! I found out that it has been practiced since Biblical times. A very good example can be found in the Book of Kings 1 in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. I also discovered a fully documented case of remote viewing that took place in the 18th century. In next week's column, I shall describe these two remarkable remote viewing cases.

The next Institute for Human Development seminar will be held Jan. 23, 2010, 1-7 p.m., at Rm. 306, Prince Plaza I, Cond. Imperial St., Greenhills, Mandaluyong City. For more info, call 426-7245; telephone 463-0886; e-mail jaimelicauco@yahoo.com

LIFESTYLE Wellness

Year of stress– but also of wellness

Functional training is coming with the three pillars of motion. The body knows movement, not the muscles. When people come in movement, the muscles cooperate with each motion. On this and the muscle becomes stronger.
—Gilbert Tong, on suspension training

By Anna A. Jardines

Here are learnings from experts on wellness in 2009:

The Philippines doesn't have a world-class triathlete yet so we thought the Ironman 70.3 would be just right for us. Many people ask about doing a real triathlon, referring to an Ironman, but I can assure you that an Olympic-distance race is quite taxing itself. All you need is guts—a lot of guts, discipline and knowledge on the science behind such an endurance sport."
—Wilfred Steven Uytengsu, on bringing in the country's first Ironman 70.3 event

We create our own better version of reality. Practicing optimism is the first step to healing. Then we reinterpret things to create the kind of hurts we experience. These experiences translate to other aspects of our life. —Dr. Imelda Wilkie, chair of the Accreditation of Clinical Psychologists of the Psychological Association of the Philippines

A doctor's ubiquitous white gown has been discovered by the British hospital system to be the breeding ground of bacteria and other transmittable diseases.—Dr. Jovee Ciamsing, SVP and chief medical officer of St. Luke's Medical Center, on why SLMC doctors no longer wear white gowns

In the fashion and retail circle, no one knows of this passion, and the people in gym didn't know of my "other world" either (a senator, no less) said that I could marry the two even though they are worlds apart. When friends learn I am a powerlifter, their gaze automatically goes to my arms. Some even go as far as touching my biceps!
—entrepreneur and Enthusiasts Role Cast (contact) on powerlifting

GARFIELD By Jim Davis

A. LIPIN BY JOE LASTIMOSA

PUGAD BABOY BY PH. JUNIOR

DICK TRACY

LOVEHUNGTS BY ELIZABETH CHONGCO

JAMES BOND

ERVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

TULOOK By Hans Coll

SEEH BY DAVID SHELTON

ATOMIC AND WEEDY By Vina Garcellano

KIKO MACHINE By Mario Abrera

HOROSCOPE

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

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Year of stress–but also of wellness

Front page D1

We reverse the symptoms of aging by restoring the balance of your hormones to that of a 20-year-old." —Dr. Quincy Rivera, on how hormones affect almost all aspects of physical functions, including promotion of supple skin and wrinkle prevention

You become like a stream inside, shooting cool into the furnace to keep the engine running... Each morning, when I get up to run, I know that in mind I really want to do for the rest of my life.—Jay Rojas, ironman.com forum member moderating on "Thickness Paragraph," the 3,000-km run across America

It is harder to catch a wave when surfing on fresh water. Not an ironman on the ocean, students tend to lean on their way faster when starting out in fresh water.—Darryl Dudley, certified surfing instructor from the Philippine Surfing Academy

Your mind is the life, and your breath is the string. You can't control a fly with a fly. You regulate it through the string, which is your breath. [eg.—Sanskrit scholar Shreevatsa Nevatia for "Evernote" Tool no. 18 on the Art of Living's breathing technique to combat stress

You get a high when you're moving with the wind without the aid of an external device or a motor. You're one with nature. —Beverley Aarbin King on windsurfing

When the breath stirs the body into motion, with each breath in harmony with a series of asanas (postures), it produces intense internal heat that detoxifies muscles and organs.—Hoka Iwanda, Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga teacher

Everything starts at the feet. When the feet are not properly aligned and don't support the body well, it will translate to problems all the way to your back and neck.—Toby Claudio, VP, founder of Shine

Risk of heart attack highest in December, January, study says

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

DID YOU KNOW that the risk of having heart attacks tends to be highest during the holidays?

This is according to the Circulation Journal of the American Heart Association's research based on trends and statistics which revealed that incidence normally is highest during December and January. The period focused on Christmas and New Year. The findings suggest that the holidays are a risk factor for cardiac and non-cardiac mortality.

Abrupt change

Every year people tradition to change their lifestyle. The abrupt change in the pattern of eating, drinking, sleeping, exercising, working, celebrating and socializing has an effect on the health and emotional condition of individuals. Some studies also indicate that suicides, homicides and automobile accidents increase during the festive season. There are several reasons highlighted.

- Changes in diet and alcohol consumption seem varied. In short, people tend to eat and drink beyond their limit.
- Emotional stress is connected to increased financial pressures.
- When traveling, people have no access to medical assistance or are delayed in seeking medical help.
- Weight gain during the holiday season
- Increased salt intake puts additional stress on the heart.
- Reduced level of quality and quality of health care in hospitals
- Increased respiratory problems
- Colder weather leads to increased vascular resistance, coronary spasms.
- Decreased daylight hours

What to do

1. Up your mouth, friend. Don't keep it open every time you are tired.

2. **10 gushes, hours to talk more than to eat.** Talkative people are normally slimmer than their less talkative counterparts. Besides meaningful conversations, feed the mind and heart. Stay mentally engaged with a little less food.

3. **Make it a habit to order a cup of hot water or tea before meals.** Holding a glass of juice or cup in your hand is a big spoon.

4. **Eat slowly.** Slowly gulp down your food. The French have perfected the art of dining with calm and grace. Eating slowly helps ease the burden of digestion.

Lightening the heart

Even if medical journals don't include the emotional state of the heart as a major science concern, many experts in the field of wellness do not underestimate the effect emotion have on the physical heart as well. There is a need to unburden the emotional heart. Here are some tips.

1. **Dwell on the good, not the bad.** As you look back, erase the negative memories, retain the positive.

2. **Sing a happy song.** It doesn't matter even if you're out of tune, just sing.

3. **Make peace with anyone in your life.**

4. **Make someone happy today.**

Holiday scrub

If you scrub with a gentle exfoliant like virgin coconut oil and apricot seeds, your skin will sparkle for the holidays. Add a dash of ginger and you can also have the benefits of a mild detox, so make a homemade peppermint rub. Grab 2 drops of ginger, add 1 tsp sugar, mix with 2 tbsp virgin coconut oil. It will smoothen skin. Try all-natural Beyond Beauty Ginger scrub for (632) 8689752).

BELLE OF THE BALL. Mollie Abbiss

GYNGYN Quezon | MARIVIC Vergara-dePaula Tovera | LIZ Collins | GRACE Tiongco | MOMMY of Mollie Abbiss | JONA and Nina Abbiss | NATASHA Marco

Diamonds, macaroons and fairy wings

By Larry Lerma
Contributor

GOV BAEN Ortiz

"THE ANGELS are almost tonight," parked designs diva Michelle Yuson to Gay son Gio as they entered the current Rewind haunt that the MRC had had been transformed into.

The venue became a virtual fairyland for Mollie Abbiss's 7th birthday. Her fond mom husband Lonie, in Marchesa ensemble, along with fairy-winged daughter Gianina and bubbly Ate Sayda, and son Mark with wife Tessa, welcomed 700 costumed well-wishers with champagne cocktails and residual smiles.

Spotted guests were Helen Ong, Stassy and Cory Abalajon, Ava Marie Tiano and Pooja Ortega.

By artistic jewelry framed the ceiled lobby from the diplomatic corps, high society's namesakes of industry and political hopefuls. Stargazers Maricel Bautista, while radiant and as lipsticked and mascaraed as big as make-up allies matched the cheerful positive energy of the genial dancer as they chatted each other's fairytale-inspired costume points.

To the background melodies of a chamber orchestra, the festive guests were ushered into a long fashion runway set in the garden's end set to the just-left-it-to-you design spectacle. Jun Jun Idiaez (who oversaw all the Art Deco touches) was King of Storyland in an opportunistic jumpsuit design with peach and giant butterfly wings. He welcomed the costumed crowd and directed them to the host stations of the guest ballroom.

The décor was transparent white draped tulle; the effect was like curtain curtains clouds dotted with lit-sized archangels descending on the dinner tables. A pringlam chandelier lit up like magic, while a full orchestra playing light classics and Broadway melodies formed a stupendous grand birthday-day cake.

Mollie's grandchildren, dressed as elves, offered a speech by their beloved grandma.

Guests were asked to come dressed according to the seasons they were assigned to for seating purposes. I was to the Summer Under the Sea. Aurora was the Winter Palace. At the end, having had guest the ceremony Rico and Jessie, while dessert was a glowing sweet sweet.

Ambassadors were invited attendance including Mehdi Gallardo, Yasemin Sozu Emrani, Ishwar Rangani of Turkey and Fichner family of the Netherlands.

Le Soufflé's dinner was rather late, as the guests extensively attacked the dessert tables of cake-scented macaroons, petit fours, panna cotta and fruit tarts. Soon, everyone was on a sugar rush and entered table-hopping, the second like jiggling Miller to music and fairy wings and the gentlemen pumping handshakes and back-slapping like campaigning politicos.

It was curtains the ball's coast, the finale gala to end this year of living dangerously. Declare: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" came to mind as I closed my eyes to the full December moon hovering above.

CHERELEA Lonnie

It was certainly the ball to beat, the finest gala to end this year

CZARINA Abbiss Syquia

BEAUTIFUL Ching Cruz

TWO writer-rich party designer Jocelyn Abbiss and O'Leaf Tinsley

FORTUNE Ladonna and Agnes Hollandes

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Gift of health

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, WISH FAMILY and friends health and wellness by giving them Healthway Medicash Health Membership cards. "Healthway Medicash gives you the perfect gift for your loved ones," says Connie de Leon, Healthway's vice president for sales and marketing.

Healthway membership cards are offered in, priced at P1,00, P800, P1,200, P2,000 and P3,000. These membership cards entitle the holder to privileges such as discounts on premium outpatient services, and free consultation from Healthway's top physicians. Healthway also offers a P5,000 Annual Privilege Card.

"We value the health of our customers, which is why we believe that the best cure for any illness is prevention," says De Leon.

Healthway Integrates talent with technology as it provides complete laboratory and diagnostic facilities along with a team of experienced physicians all working together to give each patient the best treatment he or she deserves.

Everyone—from major health conglomerates, corporate clients and even walk-in patients—receives the best attention and at great care as per with the country's top hospitals. Prime hospital partners Healthway includes St. Luke's Medical Center, Asian Hospital, Inc., Philippine Heart Center, Manila Doctors Hospital, Makati Medical Center, Cardinal Santos Medical Center, Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center, Philippine General Hospital, Medical City, Ospital ng Makati, Ospital ng Maynila, Quirino Memorial Medical Center, Veterans Memorial Medical Center, Philippine Orthopedic Center, Philippine Children's Medical Center, Philippine Eye Research Institute, Philippine Kidney Institute, Philippine Lung Center, Philippine Mental Health Association, Philippine Rehabilitation Institute, Philippine Women's University Medical Center, Rizal Medical Center, Tondo Medical Center, Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center, Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital and Sanitarium, Lung Center of the Philippines, Philippine Heart Center, Philippine Orthopedic Center, Philippine Children's Medical Center, Philippine Eye Research Institute, Philippine Kidney Institute, Philippine Lung Center, Philippine Mental Health Association, Philippine Rehabilitation Institute, Philippine Women's University Medical Center, Rizal Medical Center, Tondo Medical Center, Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center, Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital and Sanitarium.

Healthway also has something for gift givers this Christmas. A card purchase entitles the buyer to join the promo for a chance to win a Samsung DVD player, an Odyssey Spa Package along with an overnight stay for two at Nurture Spa, or a Samsung 21" LCD TV.

Healthway is located at Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong; Makati; Ali The Block, Robinsons Manila, Filinvest Mall and Alabang Town Center. For more information, visit www.healthway.com.ph or call 914-1800.

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Maxene Magalona

MY Christmas wish is for my family to remain close and loving until we're old and gray. I hope all of us will remain healthy as well. For the industry, I hope Filipinos will continue supporting local movies and TV shows. For the country, I wish more young people would get involved by solving poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Raymund Sam Ditigan,ph.

Actor-solon's strategy: less H'wood films in RP

By Reynel San Diego Jr.

CONGRESS, HE PLAYS THE mayor-hired hero in the movie series "Iyog Patotay", off-screen he is supporting legislation meant to help the movie industry and women. And guys.

Seriously.

The tall (and, words out of character, hot) Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., no action star known for macho or rough-guy roles, is leading up a bill that "prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity" — along with Rep. Risa Hontiveros in the Lower House.

"We are all equal under the law. It doesn't matter whether you're gay or straight. We shouldn't discriminate against anyone," Revilla explained.

He was moved to file the "anti-discrimination bill" in June 2007 when he heard that gay comedian Ruby Gerona was ordered away in a local bus.

Although the bill has met resistance from committee hearings, Revilla vowed to "continue the fight for equal rights."

Another crusade he feels strongly about is "uplifting the local movie industry."

> Bong Revilla believes this will help revive the local movie industry

No way

A hypothetical question was posed: What if the annual Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) were scrapped and Hollywood films were again allowed to be shown during Christmas time? (The highly lucrative holiday play dates, which spans two weeks, are reserved for Filipino films.)

"I won't allow that to happen," he asserted. "How else will we revive the local movie industry if we give up the holiday play dates? The rest of the year, Hollywood movies beat local productions at the box office."

If he had his way, he'd regulate the influx of foreign movies. "We should set limits, like what happened in South Korea. We should limit only one Hollywood movie a month."

He is fully aware that such a measure would prove drastic and divisive; "A lot of people would react negatively and I know it's against the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)," the actor-solon said.

In any case, he successfully reduced the amusement tax from 20 to 10 percent when a bill he authored was passed, signed and eventually lapsed into law this year.

There is talk that local government units are resisting its implementation because the amusement tax is a big source of revenue for them.

"It's already been passed by Congress. They can't do anything about that. They didn't complain while the bill was being deliberated on. In any case, reducing amusement taxes will help revive the local movie industry," Revilla said.

Following his involvement in the probe of the Stephen Hill-Katrina Feliz sex video scandal, Revilla came up with the anti-voyeurism bill. "So prevent women from predators."

As producer-actor of "Iyog Patotay," an entry in this month's MMFF, Revilla feels passionately about "offering viewers mainstream fare that's worth their time and hard-earned money."

He added, "We spent over a year making 'Patotay.' We took extra care in doing the special effects, and we had a star-studded cast ... the same one used in Hollywood movies like 'Jumper' and 'Eragon.'"

Metro Manila Film Festival

(We're running this guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday movie-ing. The 35th MMFF runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2010.)

HILARI Bourgeois and Eja Quiwa

Nobody, Nobody But Juan

Directed by Eric Quizon; stars Dolphy, Gloria Romero, Eddie Garcia, Epi Quizon, Heart Evangelista; produced by Eddie Mesinos and RVQ Productions

Dolphy plays Juan, who lives in a senior home in Chicago. He hopes to reconnect with his first love, Aida, through the game show "Werewave," on which he is booked. "Juan" is Dolphy's biggest pa-joke since the release of his best-selling memoirs, "Hindi Ko Ito Pinag-Isang-Isa."

Christian Bautista back in No. 1 slot

THE BEST-SELLING ALBUMS in the Philippines for the week Dec. 7-13, based on Odyssey Music & Video store chain's nationwide sales report:

Overall

1) "My Christmas," Andrea Bocelli, MCA Music; 2) "Romance Revisited: The Love Songs of Jose Mari Chan (Orchestra Minus One Edition)," Christian Bautista, Universal Records; 3) "Freedom (Platinum Edition)," Taylor Swift, MCA Nashville; 4) "Bare Na Nga," Willie Revillame, Star Records; 5) "Recollections Of The Soul," Hilera, Warner Music; 6) "The Stein Mixes," Lady Gaga," MCA Music; 7) "The Appaloosa," Ultraclub, MCA Music; 8) "I Dreamed A Dream," Susan Boyle, Sony Music; 9) "My Afterlife," Justin Bieber, MCA Music; 10) "After The Music (Vol. 2)," Various Artists, Sony Music

CHRISTIAN Bautista

OPM

1) "Romance Revisited: The Love Songs of Jose Mari Chan (Orchestra Minus One Edition)," Christian Bautista, Universal Records; 2) "Freedom (Platinum Edition)," Taylor Swift, MCA Nashville; 3) "Bare Na Nga," Willie Revillame, Star Records; 4) "Recollections Of The Soul," Hilera, Warner Music; 5) "The Appaloosa," Ultraclub, MCA Music; 6) "Christmas Dance-A-Thon Reloaded," Various Artists, Synergy Music; 7) "Mga Bukas Pa (Salaysay Soundtrack)," Various Artists, Star Records; 8) "Christmas In Our Hearts," Jose Mari Chan, Universal Records; 9) "Music & Me," Sarah Geronimo, Viva Records; 10) "Ay L," Martin Nievera & Gary Valenciano, Universal Records

US Top 10 singles

The top 10 music in the United States, according to digital downloads, as they appear on the Billboard Hot 100 chart:

1) "Empire State Of Mind," Jay-Z + Alicia Keys, Roc Nation; 2) "TiK ToK," Ke$ha, RCA/RWG; 3) "Bad Romance," Lady Gaga, Interscope; 4) "Replay" Iyaz, Wamer Bros; 5) "Paradise," Owl City, Universal republic; 6) "Bow Chicka," Dave Guetta feat. Akon Virgin/EMI; 7) "Whatcha Say," Jason Derulo, Beluga Heights/Warner Bros; 8) "Need You Tonight," The Black Eyed Peas, Interscope; 9) "21," Britney Spears, Jive; 10) "Down," Jay Sean feat. Lil Wayne, Cash Money/Universal Republic

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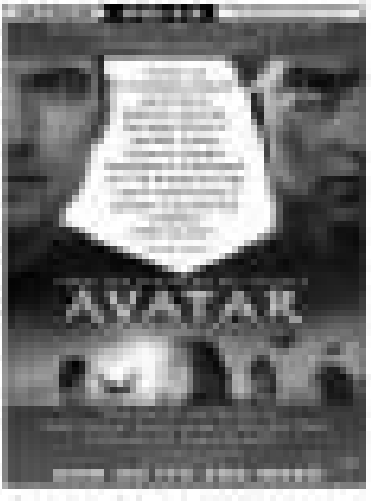
AVATAR

OPENS DECEMBER 11

CINEMA

Vic and Pidol: Friendship on a 'different' level

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE IMPENDING FACE-OFF between Vic Sotto's comedy film "Ang Tanging Ilong Annora" and Dolphy's "Nobody, Nobody But Juan" is this year's Metro Manila Film Festival is not about to strain the two comedians' friendship.

"The two may level up pagmamalaki (or tension)," Vic said during a media gathering. "Whatever ideyanis have been created because of our movies mean nothing to us."

Vic and Dolphy first worked together in 2006, on the Tony Reyes-comedy film, "Isdang Bolodo." In Dolphy's MMFF movie, he is a do-hard fan of Mrs (Zsa) "Wowowee," main protagonist of GMA 7's "Ust Bulaga," where Vic is one of the hosts.

"I saw an interview where Dolphy said he felt sad about not being able to promote his movie on Bulaga. He will never ask me that favor," said Vic.

He added: "But wherever and whenever Dolphy promotes his movie, he also promotes mine. I do the same when I answer questions about his film. We don't see each other as rivals; neither do I consider the other festival entries as competitors. Dolphy and I are allies in the sense that we both want viewers to have a good laugh."

In "Ang Tanging Ilong Annora," Vic plays Victor, a married who falls in love with an unwing named Nika (Caroline Suzara). Elma is promised to marry Amanda (Isabel Rivas), another unwing. But she refuses and escapes, and lives in the city where she eventually meets Victor, a widower with two daughters.

Also in the cast is controversial comedian Richie D'Horsie, who was rumored from Quinto just over a year ago after he reportedly fled from the possession of illegal drugs. Medias said Vic and the latter's elder brother, former senator Tito Sotto, drolled out the P320,000 bail bond for Richie's release.

"Prince Mi has changed Richie—by the better," said Mr. "His jail was the best role model because he saw..."

"Ang Tanging Ilong Annora," directed by Tony Reyes, also features Jean Garcia and Agot Isidro.

"We promote one another's movies," says Vic Sotto (R), here with Dolphy during an earlier interview with reporters.

Marriage tips for Ciara

TITO SOTTO HAS NO APPREHENSIONS about his daughter Ciara wedding long time beau Jo Quimzon next year.

"It is very good for Ciara," says Tito Sen. "He is very mature and understanding. She's in good hands. Ciara is the last one to get hitched among my four kids, four of course, I know. I will still get emotional during the wedding, just like any dad."

The doubting father of the bride gave her some tips. "I told her that for marriage to be successful and blissful, both of them should cooperate with an A. It's not just the wedding ring, it is also caring and sharing as they can avoid the third ring which is suffering."

With a supposedly dad like Tito, how can Ciara's marriage fail? I know if she will room have a husband, Ciara will never totally leave behind... her dad.

***

It was such a delight to meet Sam Oh and Chef Nino Logarta. They spread around chefs just do once as well, it's very much fit in their cooking show, "Sarap at Ilumari," on QTV (weekdays, 10:30 a.m., 8:30 p.m., 9:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 2:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 7:00 p.m.; Sundays, 2:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 9:30 p.m.).

The show delivers a fresh take on cooking programs, presenting snacks of nations, streets style in every episode, neighbor Sam and Nino encounter a dilemma and end up cooking a flavorful, easy-to-prepare dish that complements the situation. They have the honest facts celebs as guests sampling their concoctions. The hosty sandwich doesn't just cook yummy dishes, they cook up a ton of a show!

Since Sam Oh is Korean, I enjoyed practicing with her basic Korean expressions I picked up when I used to frequent Seoul during my grandchildren's twins as ambassador there. I asked Sam to do her own English translation of the original Korean lyrics of the wonder-kirki' number "Ist "Nobody." How goes Korean homonds, Mr. Ipade Sam? C

Sam knew! I still love you baby.

And it will never change.

I want nobody nobody but you ...

Why do you push me away? You don't listen to me

Why are you pushing me to another guy?

How could you do this?

You say you're doing it for me

That you're not good enough for me

It's time to stop now; you know me

Why do you insist on something I don't want?

I like you, I'm happy

All I need is you, I can't ask for more

Why do you request me to be happy with? I can't be happy away from you.

You say you're doing it for me

That you're not good enough for me

It doesn't make sense, how can I be happy without you?

(Sing!)

Back to the days when we were so young and wild and free

I want to go back to the days when everything felt like a dream

Why do you keep pushing me away?

E-mail: sonningbolong@yahoo.com

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Astor Carrejo!

"It's happiest when working," says Susan.

Working X'mas for Susan Roces

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

IT'LL BE A WORKING CHRISTMAS FOR movie queen Susan Roces.

She told boys sons that she will be busy taping the GMA 7 series "Susu Ngayong Pasko" over the holidays. The series runs till Jan. 8.

It's not the first time for Susan to work at this time of year. In 2008, she top-billed the Metro Manila Film Fest entry "Mano Po 2: My Home."

"I was also involved in all of my late husband's (Fernando the JU Fonder) movies, which were usually shown at Christmas," she recounted. "But my work on those movies were on a purchase (for PR/Promotions)."

Since her husband's passing on Dec. 16, 2008, Christmas celebrations have changed for Susan. "Like any traditional Filipino family, we still go to church, usually to hear the six o'clock Mass, and then we have dinner. Since (Ff) died, our family reunions are held alternately with relatives — with my sisters-in-law, my brothers-in-law, or with my daughter Grace."

Clarification

Career wise, this will be Susan's first Christmas as a Kapuso. She'd like to correct the impression that she moved from ABS-CBN. "I'm a freelancer," she explained. "Last Feb very respectful for the actress (now GMA 7 exec) Susan Roces. I'm not going to mention my name. I'm Mike Tan's (Susu Ngayong Pasko') don't come every day to network me, me." It's not good for me as an actress. He himself is here (senior) opposition... (so) because of the network war, the nickel.

Truth to tell, Mike still passionate about her craft. While doing "Susu Ngayong Pasko," she didn't think twice about reading in Bandarans for the recreation of events during tropical storm "Ondoy."

Susan recalled, "I told (co-star) Eddie Gutierrez, 'Ito ang drama, it's action.' For so long as my limbs aren't put at risk, I'm game."

She said lately, during taping late nights, however, "My manager, Dolor Guevarra, requests that I work only until midnight. So as early may, I don't mind requesting to be set free later of the day and I can work the whole day. Not after midnight, kasi nasa edad."

What sealed the GMA 7 deal for her, Susan said, were the role and the story. "I wasn't just added to the shows to make the cast seem big, get. I'm happiest when working. If a role suits me, I'll do it."